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THE

WORKS

OF

JOHN OWEN, D.D.

EDITED

BY THOMAS RUSSELL, M.A.

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS,
BY WILLIAM ORME.

VOL. XIII.

CONTAINING

THE NATURE, POWER, DECEIT, AND PREVALENCY,
OF THE REMAINDERS OF INDWELLING SIN IN BELIEVERS; AND
ΦΡΟΝΗΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ; OR,
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THE

NATURE, POWER, DECEIT, AND PREVALENCY,

OF THE REMAINDERS OF

INDWELLING SIN

IN BELIEVERS;

TOGETHER

WITH THE WAYS OF ITS WORKING, AND MEANS OF PREVENTION; OPENED, EVINCED, AND APPLIED, WITH A RESOLUTION OF SUNDRY CASES OF CONSCIENCE THEREUNTO APPERTAINING.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. vii. 24, 25.

THE PREFACE.

THAT the doctrine of original sin is one of the fundamental truths of our Christian profession, hath been always owned in the church of God. And an especial part it is of that peculiar possession of truth, which they enjoy, whose religion towards God is built upon, and resolved into, divine revelation. As the world by its wisdom never knew God aright, so the wise men of it were always utterly ignorant of this inbred evil in themselves and others. With us the doctrine and conviction of it lie in the very foundation of all wherein we have to do with God, in reference unto our pleasing of him here, or obtaining the enjoyment of him hereafter. It is also known what influence it hath into the great truths concerning the person of Christ, his mediation, the fruits and effects of it, with all the benefits that we are made partakers of thereby. Without a supposition of it, not any of them can be truly known, or savingly believed. For this cause hath it been largely treated of by many holy and learned men, both of old and of latter days. Some have laboured in the discovery of its nature, some of its guilt and demerit; by whom also the truth concerning it hath been vindicated from the opposition made unto it, in the past and present ages. By most these things have been considered in their full extent and latitude, with respect unto all men by nature, with the estate and condition of them who are wholly under the power and guilt of it. How thereby men are disenabled and incapacitated in themselves to answer the obedience required either in the law or the gospel, so as to free themselves from the curse of the one, or to make themselves partakers of the blessing of the other, hath been by many also fully evinced. Moreover, that there are remainders of it abiding in

believers after their regeneration and conversion to God, as the Scripture abundantly testifies, so it hath been fully taught and confirmed; as also how the guilt of it is pardoned unto them, and by what means the power of it is weakened in them. All these things, I say, have been largely treated on, to the great benefit and edification of the church. In what we have now in design, we therefore take them all for granted, and endeavour only farther to carry on the discovery of it in its actings and oppositions to the law and grace of God in believers. Neither do I intend the discussing of any thing that hath been controverted about it. What the Scripture plainly revealeth and teacheth concerning it, what believers evidently find by experience in themselves, what they may learn from the examples and acknowledgments of others, shall be represented in a way suited unto the capacity of the meanest and weakest who is concerned therein. And many things seem to render the handling of it at this season not unnecessary. The effects and fruits of it, which we see in the apostacies and backslidings of many, the scandalous sins and miscarriages of some, and the course and lives of the most, seem to call for a due consideration of it. Besides, of how great concernment a full and clear acquaintance with the power of this indwelling sin (the matter designed to be opened) is unto believers, to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence, to faith and prayer, to call them to repentance, humility, and self-abasement, will appear in our progress. These in general were the ends aimed at in the ensuing discourse, which being at first composed and delivered for the use and benefit of a few, is now by the providence of God made public. And if the reader receive any advantage by these weak endeavours, let him know that it is his duty, as to give glory unto God, so to help them by his prayers, who in many temptations and afflictions are willing to labour in the vineyard of the Lord, unto which work they are called.

THE

NATURE, POWER, DECEIT, AND PREVALENCY

OF THE REMAINDERS OF

INDWELLING SIN

IN BELIEVERS.

CHAP. I.

Indwelling sin in believers treated of by the apostle, Rom. vii. 21. *The place explained.*

It is of indwelling sin, and that in the remainders of it in persons after their conversion to God, with its power, efficacy, and effects, that we intend to treat. This also is the great design of the apostle, to manifest and evince in chap. vii. of the Epistle to the Romans. Many, indeed, are the contests about the principal scope of the apostle in that chapter, and in what state the person is, under the law, or under grace, whose condition he expresseth therein. I shall not at present enter into that dispute, but take that for granted, which may be undeniably proved and evinced; namely, that it is the condition of a regenerate person, with respect unto the remaining power of indwelling sin, which is there proposed and exemplified, by and in the person of the apostle himself. In that discourse therefore of his, shall the foundation be laid of what we have to offer upon this subject. Not that I shall proceed in an exposition of his revelation of this truth, as it lies in its own contexture, but only make use of what is delivered by him, as occasion shall offer itself. And here first occurreth that which he affirms, ver. 21. 'I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.'

There are four things observable in these words:

First, The appellation he gives unto indwelling sin, whereby he expresseth its power and efficacy; it is 'a law.'

For that which he terms 'a law,' in this verse, he calls in the foregoing, 'sin that dwelleth in him.'

Secondly, The way whereby he came to the discovery of this law, not absolutely, and in its own nature, but in himself, he found it; 'I find a law.'

Thirdly, The frame of his soul and inward man with this law of sin, and under its discovery; he 'would do good.'

Fourthly, The state and activity of this law, when the soul is in that frame, when it would do good, it 'is present with him.' For what ends and purposes we shall shew afterward.

The first thing observable is the compellation here used by the apostle. He calls indwelling sin 'a law.' It is a law.

A law is taken either properly, for a directive rule, or improperly, for an operative effective principle, which seems to have the force of a law. In its first sense, it is a moral rule which directs and commands, and sundry ways moves and regulates the mind and the will, as to the things which it requires or forbids. This is evidently the general nature and work of a law. Some things it commands, some things it forbids, with rewards and penalties, which move and impel men to do the one, and avoid the other. Hence in a secondary sense, an inward principle, that moves and inclines constantly unto any actions, is called a law. The principle that is in the nature of every thing, moving and carrying it towards its own end and rest, is called the law of nature. In this respect every inward principle that inclineth and urgeth unto operations or actings suitable to itself, is a law. So, Rom. viii. 2. the powerful and effectual working of the Spirit and grace of Christ in the hearts of believers, is called 'the law of the Spirit of life.' And for this reason doth the apostle here call indwelling sin a law. It is a powerful and effectual indwelling principle, inclining and pressing unto actions agreeable and suitable unto its own nature. This, and no other, is the intention of the apostle in this expression; for although that term, "a law," may sometimes intend a state and condition, and if here so used, the meaning of the words should be, I find that this is my condition, this is the state of things with me, that 'when I would do good evil is present with me,' which makes no great alteration in the principal intendment of the place; yet properly it can

denote nothing here, but the chief subject treated of; for although the name of a law be variously used by the apostle in this chapter, yet when it relates unto sin, it is nowhere applied by him to the condition of the person, but only to express either the nature, or the power of sin itself: so, ver. 23. 'I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity unto the law of sin, which is in my members.' That which he here calls the law of his mind, from the principal subject and seat of it, is in itself no other but the 'law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus;' chap. viii. 2. or the effectual power of the Spirit of grace, as was said. But the law, as applied unto sin, hath a double sense; for as in the first place, 'I see a law in my members,' it denotes the being and nature of sin; so in the latter, 'leading into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members,' it signifies its power and efficacy: and both these are comprised in the same name singly used, ver. 20. Now that which we observe from this name, or term of a 'law' attributed unto sin, is, That there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainders of indwelling sin in believers, with a constant working towards evil.

Thus it is in believers; it is a law even in them, though not to them. Though its rule be broken, its strength weakened and impaired, its root mortified, yet it is a law still of great force and efficacy. There where it is least felt, it is most powerful. Carnal men, in reference unto spiritual and moral duties, are nothing but this law; they do nothing but from it, and by it. It is in them a ruling and prevailing principle of all moral actions, with reference unto a supernatural and eternal end. I shall not consider it in them in whom it hath most power, but in them in whom its power is chiefly discovered and discerned, that is, in believers; in the others only in order to the farther conviction and manifestation thereof.

Secondly, The apostle proposeth the way whereby he discovered this law in himself, *εὑρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον*, 'I find then,' or therefore, 'a law.' He found it; it had been told him there was such a law; it had been preached unto him. This convinced him, that there was a law of sin. But it is one thing for a man to know in general, that there is a law of sin; another thing for a man to have an experience of the

power of this law of sin in himself. It is preached to all; all men that own the Scripture acknowledge it, as being declared therein: but they are but few that know it in themselves; we should else have more complaints of it than we have, and more contendings against it, and less fruits of it in the world. But this is that which the apostle affirms; not that the doctrine of it had been preached unto him, but that he found it by experience in himself. 'I find a law;' I have experience of its power and efficacy. For a man to find his sickness and danger thereon from its effects, is another thing than to hear a discourse about a disease from its causes. And this experience is the great preservative of all divine truths in the soul. This it is to know a thing indeed, in reality, to know it for ourselves, when as we are taught it from the word, so we find it in ourselves. Hence we observe,

Secondly, Believers have experience of the power and efficacy of indwelling sin. They find it in themselves, they find it as a law. It hath a self-evidencing efficacy to them that are alive to discern it: they that find not its power, are under its dominion. Whosoever contend against it, shall know and find, that it is present with them, that it is powerful in them. He shall find the stream to be strong who swims against it, though he who rolls along with it be insensible of it.

Thirdly, The general frame of believers, notwithstanding the inhabitation of this law of sin, is here also expressed. They 'would do good.' This law is present, *θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλὸν*. The habitual inclination of their will is unto good. The law in them is not a law unto them, as it is to unbelievers. They are not wholly obnoxious to its power, nor morally unto its commands. Grace hath the sovereignty in their souls: this gives them a will unto good; they 'would do good,' that is, always and constantly; 1 John iii. 9. *ποιεῖν ἁμαρτίαν*, 'to commit sin,' is to make a trade of sin, to make it a man's business to sin. So it is said, a believer doth not commit sin; and so *ποιεῖν τὸ καλὸν* to do that which is good; to will to do so, is to have the habitual bent and inclination of the will set on that which is good; that is, morally and spiritually good, which is the proper subject treated of; whence is our third observation:

There is, and there is through grace kept up in believers,

a constant and ordinarily prevailing will of doing good, notwithstanding the power and efficacy of indwelling sin to the contrary.

This in their worst condition, distinguisheth them from unbelievers in their best. The will in unbelievers is under the power of the law of sin. The opposition they make to sin, either in the root or branches of it, is from their light and their consciences; the will of sinning in them is never taken away. Take away all other considerations and hinderances, whereof we shall treat afterward, and they would sin willingly always. Their faint endeavours to answer their convictions, are far from a will of doing that which is good. They will plead, indeed, that they would leave their sins if they could, and they would fain do better than they do. But it is the working of their light and convictions, not any spiritual inclination of their wills, which they intend by that expression: for where there is a will of doing good, there is a choice of that which is good for its own excellency sake; because it is desirable and suitable to the soul, and therefore to be preferred before that which is contrary. Now this is not in any unbelievers; they do not, they cannot, so choose that which is spiritually good, nor is it so excellent or suitable unto any principle that is in them; only they have some desires to attain that end, whereunto that which is good doth lead, and to avoid that evil which the neglect of it tends unto. And these also are for the most part so weak and languid in many of them, that they put them not upon any considerable endeavours; witness that luxury, sloth, worldliness, and security, that the generality of men are even drowned in. But in believers there is a will of doing good, an habitual disposition and inclination in their wills unto that which is spiritually good; and where this is, it is accompanied with answerable effects. The will is the principle of our moral actions, and therefore unto the prevailing disposition thereof, will the general course of our actings be suited. Good things will proceed from the good treasures of the heart; nor can this disposition be evidenced to be in any but by its fruits. A will of doing good, without doing good, is but pretended.

Fourthly, There is yet another thing remaining in these words of the apostle, arising from that respect that the pre-

sence of sin hath unto the time and season of duty; 'When I would do good,' saith he, 'evil is present with me.'

There are two things to be considered in the will of doing good, that is in believers.

1. There is its habitual residence in them. They have always an habitual inclination of will unto that which is good. And this habitual preparation for good is always present with them, as the apostle expresses it, ver. 18. of this chapter.

2. There are especial times and seasons for the exercise of that principle. There is a 'when I would do good,' a season wherein this or that good, this or that duty, is to be performed and accomplished, suitably unto the habitual preparation and inclination of the will.

Unto these two, there are two things in indwelling sin opposed. To the gracious principle residing in the will, inclining unto that which is spiritually good, it is opposed as it is a law, that is, a contrary principle inclining unto evil, with an aversation from that which is good. Unto the second, or the actual willing of this or that good in particular, unto this 'when I would do good,' is opposed the presence of this law, 'evil is present with me,' παράκειται ἐμοι τὸ κακὸν; evil is at hand and ready to oppose the actual accomplishment of the good aimed at. Whence,

Fourthly, Indwelling sin is effectually operative in rebelling and inclining to evil, when the will of doing good is in a particular manner active, and inclining unto obedience.

And this is the description of him who is a believer, and a sinner, as every one who is the former, he is the latter also. These are the contrary principles, and the contrary operations that are in him. The principles are a will of doing good, on the one hand, from grace, and a law of sin on the other. Their adverse actings and operations are insinuated in those expressions, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' And these both are more fully expressed by the apostle, Gal. v. 17. 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that I cannot do the things that I would.'

And here lie the springs of the whole course of our obedience. An acquaintance with these several principles and their actings, is the principal part of our wisdom. They are,

upon the matter, next to the free grace of God in our justification by the blood of Christ, the only things wherein the glory of God and our own souls are concerned. These are the springs of our holiness and our sins, of our joys and troubles, of our refreshments and sorrows. It is then all our concernments to be thoroughly acquainted with these things, who intend to walk with God, and to glorify him in this world.

And hence we may see what wisdom is required, in the guiding and management of our hearts and ways before God. Where the subjects of a ruler are in feuds, and oppositions one against another, unless great wisdom be used in the government of the whole, all things will quickly be ruinous in that state. There are these contrary principles in the hearts of believers; and if they labour not to be spiritually wise, how shall they be able to steer their course aright? Many men live in the dark to themselves all their days; whatever else they know, they know not themselves. They know their outward estates, how rich they are, and the condition of their bodies as to health and sickness they are careful to examine; but as to their inward man, and their principles as to God and eternity, they know little or nothing of themselves. Indeed few labour to grow wise in this matter, few study themselves as they ought, are acquainted with the evil of their own hearts as they ought, on which yet the whole course of their obedience, and consequently of their eternal condition, doth depend. This therefore is our wisdom, and it is a needful wisdom, if we have any design to please God, or to avoid that which is a provocation to the eyes of his glory.

We shall find also in our inquiry hereinto, what diligence and watchfulness is required unto a Christian conversation. There is a constant enemy unto it in every one's own heart; and what an enemy it is we shall afterward show, for this is our design to discover him to the uttermost. In the mean time we may well bewail the woful sloth and negligence that is in the most, even in professors. They live and walk as though they intended to go to heaven hood-winked, and asleep, as though they had no enemy to deal withal. Their mistake therefore and folly will be fully laid open in our progress.

That which I shall principally fix upon, in reference unto our present design, from this place of the apostle, is that which was first laid down, namely, that there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainder of indwelling sin in believers, with a constant inclination and working towards evil.

Awake, therefore, all of you in whose hearts are any thing of the ways of God. Your enemy is not only upon you, as on Sampson of old, but is in you also. He is at work by all ways of force and craft, as we shall see. Would you not dishonour God and his gospel, would you not scandalize the saints and ways of God, would you not wound your consciences and endanger your souls, would you not grieve the good and Holy Spirit of God, the author of all your comforts, would you keep your garments undefiled, and escape the woful temptations and pollutions of the days wherein we live, would you be preserved from the number of the apostates in these latter days; awake to the consideration of this cursed enemy, which is the spring of all these and innumerable other evils, as also of the ruin of all the souls that perish in this world.

CHAP. II.

Indwelling sin a law. In what sense it is so called. What kind of law it is. An inward effective principle called a law. The power of sin thence evinced.

THAT which we have proposed unto consideration is the power and efficacy of indwelling sin. The ways whereby it may be evinced are many. I shall begin with the appellation of it in the place before mentioned; it is a law; 'I find a law,' saith the apostle. It is because of its power and efficacy that it is so called; so is also the principle of grace in believers 'the law of the Spirit of life,' as we observed before, Rom. viii. 3. which is the 'exceeding greatness of the power of God in them;' Eph. i. 19. Where there is a law, there is power.

We shall therefore shew both what belongs unto it, as it is a law in general, and also what is peculiar or proper in it, as being such a law as we have described.

There are in general two things attending every law, as such.

First, Dominion; Rom. vii. 1. 'The law hath dominion over a man whilst he liveth;' κυριεύει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 'it lordeth it over a man.' Where any law takes place, κυριεύει, it hath dominion. It is properly the act of a superior, and it belongs to its nature to exact obedience by way of dominion. Now there is a twofold dominion, as there is a twofold law. There is a moral authoritative dominion over a man, and there is a real effective dominion in a man. The first is an affection of the law of God, the latter of the law of sin. The law of sin hath not in itself a moral dominion, it hath not a rightful dominion or authority over any man, but it hath that which is equivalent unto it; whence it is said βασιλεύειν, to reign as a king; Rom. vi. 12. and κυριεύειν, to lord it, or have dominion; ver. 14. as a law in general is said to have, chap. vii. 1. But because it hath lost its complete dominion, in reference unto believers, of whom alone we speak, I shall not insist upon it in this utmost extent of its power. But even in them it is a law still, though not a law unto them; yet, as was said, it is a law in them. And though it have not a complete and, as it were, a rightful dominion over them, yet it will have a domination as to some things in them. It is still a law, and that in them, so that all its actings are the actings of a law; that is, it acts with power, though it have lost its complete power of ruling in them. Though it be weakened, yet its nature is not changed. It is a law still, and therefore powerful. And as its particular workings, which we shall afterward consider, are the ground of this appellation, so the term itself teacheth us in general, what we are to expect from it, and what endeavours it will use for dominion, to which it hath been accustomed.

Secondly, A law, as a law, hath an efficacy to provoke those that are obnoxious unto it unto the things that it requireth. A law hath rewards and punishments accompanying of it. These secretly prevail on them to whom they are proposed, though the things commanded be not much desirable. And generally all laws have their efficacy on the minds of men, from the rewards and punishments that are annexed unto them. Nor is this law without this spring of power: it hath its rewards and punishments. The pleasures

of sin are the rewards of sin; a reward that most men lose their souls to obtain. By this the law of sin contended in Moses against the law of grace; Heb. xi. 25, 26. 'He chose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he looked unto the recompense of reward.' The contest was in his mind between the law of sin, and the law of grace. The motive on the part of the law of sin, wherewith it sought to draw him over, and wherewith it prevails on the most, was the reward that it proposed unto him, namely, that he should have the present enjoyment of the pleasures of sin. By this it contended against the reward annexed unto the law of grace, called 'the recompense of reward.'

By this sorry reward doth this law keep the world in obedience to its commands. And experience shews us, of what power it is to influence the minds of men. It hath also punishments that it threatens men with, who labour to cast off its yoke. Whatever evil, trouble, or danger in the world attends gospel obedience; whatever hardship or violence is to be offered to the sensual part of our natures in a strict course of mortification, sin makes use of as if they were punishments attending the neglect of its commands. By these it prevails on the fearful, who shall have no share in life eternal; Rev. xxi. 8. And it is hard to say by whether of these, its pretended rewards, or pretended punishments, it doth most prevail, in whether of them its greatest strength doth lie. By its rewards it enticeth men to sins of commission, as they are called, in ways and actions tending to the satisfaction of its lusts. By its punishments it induceth men to the omitting of duties, a course tending to no less a pernicious event than the former. By which of these the law of sin hath its greatest success in and upon the souls of men, is not evident, and that because they are seldom or never separated, but equally take place on the same persons. But this is certain, that by tenders and promises of the pleasures of sin on the one hand, by threats of the deprivation of all sensual contentments, and the infliction of temporal evils on the other, it hath an exceeding efficacy on the minds of men, oftentimes on believers themselves. Unless a man be prepared to reject the reasonings that will offer themselves from the one and the other of these, there is no standing be-

fore the power of the law. The world falls before them every day. With what deceit and violence they are urged and imposed on the minds of men, we shall afterward declare; as also what advantages they have to prevail upon them. Look on the generality of men, and you shall find them wholly by these means at sin's disposal. Do the profits and pleasures of sin lie before them, nothing can withhold them from reaching after them. Do difficulties and inconveniencies attend the duties of the gospel, they will have nothing to do with them; and so are wholly given up to the rule and dominion of this law.

And this light in general we have into the power and efficacy of indwelling sin from the general nature of a law, whereof it is partaker.

We may consider, nextly, what kind of law in particular it is, which will farther evidence that power of it, which we are inquiring after. It is not an outward, written, commanding, directing law, but an inbred, working, impelling, urging law. A law proposed unto us, is not to be compared for efficacy to a law inbred in us. Adam had a law of sin proposed to him in his temptation, but because he had no law of sin inbred and working in him, he might have withstood it. An inbred law must needs be effectual. Let us take an example from that law, which is contrary to this law of sin. The law of God, was at first inbred and natural unto man, it was concreated with his faculties, and was their rectitude both in being and operation in reference to his end of living unto God, and glorifying of him. Hence it had an especial power in the whole soul, to enable it unto all obedience, yea, and to make all obedience easy and pleasant. Such is the power of an inbred law. And though this law, as to the rule and dominion of it, be now by nature cast out of the soul, yet the remaining sparks of it, because they are inbred, are very powerful and effectual, as the apostle declares, Rom ii. 14, 15. Afterward God renews this law, and writes it in tables of stone. But what is the efficacy of this law? Will it now as it is external, and proposed unto men, enable them to perform the things that it exacts and requires? Not at all. God knew it would not, unless it were turned to an internal law again; that is, until of a moral outward rule, it be turned into an in-

ward real principle. Wherefore God makes his law internal again, and implants it on the heart as it was at first, when he intends to give it power to produce obedience in his people; Jer. xxxi. 31—33. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' This is that which God fixeth on, as it were, upon a discovery of the insufficiency of an outward law leading men unto obedience. The written law, saith he, will not do it; mercies and deliverances from distress will not effect it; trials and afflictions will not accomplish it; then, saith the Lord, will I take another course; I will turn the written law, into an internal living principle in their hearts, and that will have such an efficacy, as shall assuredly make them my people, and keep them so. Now such is this law of sin, it is an indwelling law; Rom. vii. 17. 'It is sin that dwelleth in me;' ver. 20. 'Sin that dwelleth in me;' ver. 21. It 'is present with me;' ver. 23. It 'is in my members;' yea, it is so far in a man, as in some sense it is said to be the man himself, ver. 18. 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) there dwelleth no good thing.' The flesh, which is the seat and throne of this law, yea, which indeed in this law, is in some sense the man himself, as grace also is the new man. Now from this consideration of it, that it is an indwelling law inclining and moving to sin, as an inward habit or principle, it hath sundry advantages increasing its strength and furthering its power. As,

1. It always abides in the soul, it is never absent. The apostle twice useth that expression, it 'dwelleth in me.' There is its constant residence and habitation. If it came upon the soul only at certain seasons, much obedience might be perfectly accomplished in its absence. Yea, and as they deal with usurping tyrants, whom they intend to thrust out of a city, the gates might be sometimes shut against it, that it might not return. The soul might fortify itself against it. But the soul is its home, there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Wherever you are, whatever you are about, this law of sin is always in you; in the best that you do, and in the worst. Men little consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them. When they are in company, when alone, by night or by day, all is one, sin is with them. There is a living coal continually in their houses, which, if it be not looked unto, will fire them,

and it may be consume them. O the woful security of poor souls! How little do the most of men think of this inbred enemy, that is never from home! How little, for the most part, doth the watchfulness of any professors answer the danger of their state and condition!

2. It is always ready to apply itself to every end and purpose that it serves unto. It doth not only 'dwell in me,' saith the apostle, 'but when I would do good, it is present with me;' there is somewhat more in that expression, than mere indwelling. An inmate may dwell in a house, and yet not be always meddling with what the good man of the house hath to do (that so we may keep to the allusion of indwelling, used by the apostle); but it is so with this law, it doth so dwell in us, as that it will be present with us in every thing we do; yea, oftentimes when with most earnestness we desire to be quit of it, with most violence it will put itself upon us; 'When I would do good, it is present with me.' Would you pray, would you hear, would you give alms, would you meditate, would you be in any duty acting faith on God, and love towards him, would you work righteousness, would you resist temptations; this troublesome perplexing indweller, will still more or less put itself upon you, and be present with you, so that you cannot perfectly and completely accomplish the thing that is good, as our apostle speaks, ver. 18. Sometimes men by hearkening to their temptations, do stir up, excite, and provoke their lusts; and no wonder if then they find them present and active. But it will be so, when with all our endeavours we labour to be free from them. This law of sin dwells in us, that is, it adheres as a depraved principle unto our minds in darkness and vanity; unto our affections in sensuality; unto our wills in a loathing of, and aversation from, that which is good; and by some, more, or all, of these, is continually putting itself upon us, in inclinations, motions, or suggestions to evil, when we would be most gladly quit of it.

3. It being an indwelling law, it applies itself to its work with great facility and easiness, like 'the sin that doth so easily beset us;' Heb. xii. 1. It hath a great facility and easiness in the application of itself unto its work, it needs no doors to be opened unto it, it needs no engines to work by. The soul cannot apply itself to any duty of a man, but

it must be by the exercise of those faculties wherein this law hath its residence. Is the understanding or the mind to be applied unto any thing? there it is in ignorance, darkness, vanity, folly, madness. Is the will to be engaged? there it is also in spiritual deadness, stubbornness, and the roots of obstinacy. Is the heart and affections to be set on work? there it is in inclinations to the world, and present things, and sensuality, with proneness to all manner of defilements. Hence it is easy for it to insinuate itself into all that we do, and to hinder all that is good, and to farther all sin and wickedness. It hath an intimacy, an inwardness with the soul, and therefore in all that we do, doth easily beset us. It possesseth those very faculties of the soul, whereby we must do what we do, whatever it be, good or evil. Now all these advantages it hath as it is a law, as an indwelling law, which manifests its power and efficacy. It is always resident in the soul, it puts itself upon all its actings, and that with easiness and facility.

This is that law which the apostle affirms that he found in himself, this is the title that he gives unto the powerful and effectual remainder of indwelling sin even in believers, and these general evidences of its power from that appellation have we. Many there are in the world, who find not this law in them; who, whatever they have been taught in the word, have not a spiritual sense and experience of the power of indwelling sin, and that because they are wholly under the dominion of it. They find not that there is darkness and folly in their minds, because they are darkness itself, and darkness will discover nothing. They find not deadness and an indisposition in their hearts and wills to God, because they are dead wholly in trespasses and sins. They are at peace with their lusts, by being in bondage unto them. And this is the state of most men in the world, which makes them wofully despise all their eternal concernments. Whence is it that men follow and pursue the world with so much greediness, that they neglect heaven, and life, and immortality for it every day? Whence is it that some pursue their sensuality with delight, they will drink, and revel, and have their sports, let others say what they please? Whence is it that so many live so unprofitably under the word, that they understand so little of what is spoken unto them, that

they practise less of what they understand, and will by no means be stirred up to answer the mind of God in his calls unto them? It is all from this law of sin, and the power of it that rules and bears sway in men, that all these things do proceed; but it is not such persons of whom at present we particularly treat.

From what hath been spoken, it will ensue, that if there be such a law in believers, it is doubtless their duty to find it out, to find it so to be.

The more they find its power, the less they will feel its effects. It will not at all advantage a man to have an hectical distemper, and not to discover it; a fire lying secretly in his house, and not to know it. So much as men find of this law in them, so much they will abhor it, and themselves, and no more. Proportionably also to their discovery of it, will be their earnestness for grace; nor will it rise higher. All watchfulness and diligence in obedience will be answerable also thereunto. Upon this one hinge, or finding out and experiencing the power and the efficacy of this law of sin, turns the whole course of our lives. Ignorance of it breeds senselessness, carelessness, sloth, security, and pride; all which the Lord's soul abhors. Eruptions into great, open, conscience-wasting, scandalous sins, are from want of a due spiritual consideration of this law. Inquire then how it is with your souls. What do you find of this law, what experience have you of its power and efficacy? Do you find it dwelling in you, always present with you, exciting itself, or putting forth its poison with facility and easiness, at all times, in all your duties, 'when you would do good?' What humiliation, what self abasement, what intenseness in prayer, what diligence, what watchfulness doth this call for at your hands? What spiritual wisdom do you stand in need of? What supplies of grace, what assistance of the Holy Ghost will be hence also discovered. I fear we have few of us a diligence proportionable to our danger.

CHAP. III.

The seat or subject of the law of sin. The heart; what meant thereby. Properties of the heart as possessed by sin. Unsearchable. Deceitful. Whence that deceit ariseth. Improvements of these considerations.

HAVING manifested indwelling sin whereof we treat in the remainders of it in believers, to be a law, and evinced in general, the power of it from thence, we shall now proceed to give particular instances of its efficacy and advantages, from some things that generally relate unto it as such. And these are three. First, Its seat and subjects; secondly, Its natural properties; and thirdly, Its operation and the manner thereof, which principally we aim at, and shall attend unto.

First, For the seat and subject of this law of sin, the Scripture every where assigns it to be the heart. There indwelling sin keeps its especial residence. It hath invaded and possessed the throne of God himself; Eccles. ix. 3. 'Madness is in the heart of men whilst they live.' This is their madness, or the root of all that madness which appears in their lives. Matt. xv. 19. 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,' &c. There are many outward temptations and provocations that befall men, which excite and stir them up unto these evils. But they do but as it were open the vessel, and let out what is laid up and stored in it. The root, rise, and spring of all these things is in the heart. Temptations and occasions put nothing into a man, but only draw out what was in him before. Hence is that summary description of the whole work and effect of this law of sin, Gen. vi. 5. 'Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually.' So also, chap. viii. 21. The whole work of the law of sin, from its first rise, its first coining of actual sin, is here described; and its seat, its workhouse, is said to be the heart; and so it is called by our Saviour, 'the evil treasure of the heart,' Luke vi. 45. 'An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things.' This treasure is the prevailing principle of moral actions that is in men. So in the beginning of the

verse, our Saviour calls grace 'the good treasure of the heart' of a good man, whence that which is good doth proceed. It is a principle constantly and abundantly inciting and stirring up unto, and consequently bringing forth, actions conformable and like unto it, of the same kind and nature with itself; and it is also called a treasure for its abundance. It will never be exhausted, it is not wasted by men's spending on it; yea, the more lavish men are of this stock, the more they draw out of this treasure, the more it grows and abounds; as men do not spend their grace, but increase it by its exercise, no more do they their indwelling sin. The more men exercise their grace in duties of obedience, the more it is strengthened and increased; and the more men exert and put forth the fruits of their lust, the more is that enraged and increased in them; it feeds upon itself, swallows up its own poison, and grows thereby. The more men sin, the more are they inclined unto sin, It is from the deceitfulness of this law of sin, whereof we shall speak afterward at large, that men persuade themselves, that by this or that particular sin, they shall so satisfy their lusts, as that they shall need to sin no more. Every sin increaseth the principle, and fortifieth the habit of sinning. It is an evil treasure that increaseth by doing evil. And where doth this treasure lie? It is in the heart, there it is laid up, there it is kept in safety. All the men in the world, all the angels in heaven, cannot dispossess a man of this treasure, it is so safely stored in the heart.

The heart in the Scripture is variously used: sometimes for the mind and understanding; sometimes for the will; sometimes for the affections; sometimes for the conscience; sometimes for the whole soul. Generally it denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil. The mind as it inquireth, discerneth, and judgeth what is to be done, what refused; the will as it chooseth, or refuseth, and avoids; the affections as they like or dislike, cleave to, or have an aversation from, that which is proposed to them; the conscience as it warns, and determines, are altogether called the heart. And in this sense it is that we say the seat and subject of this law of sin is the heart of man. Only we may add, that the

Scripture speaking of the heart, as the principle of men's good or evil actions, doth usually insinuate together with it two things belonging unto the manner of their performance.

1. A suitableness and pleasingness unto the soul in the things that are done. When men take delight, and are pleased in and with what they do, they are said to do it heartily, with their whole hearts. Thus when God himself blesseth his people in love and delight, he says, he doth it 'with his whole heart, and his whole soul;' Jer. xxxii. 41.

2. Resolution and constancy in such actions. And this also is denoted in the metaphorical expression before used of a treasure, from whence men do constantly take out the things which either they stand in need of, or do intend to use.

This is the subject, the seat, the dwelling-place of this law of sin; the heart, as it is the entire principle of moral operations, of doing good or evil, as out of it proceed good or evil. Here dwells our enemy; this is the fort, the citadel of this tyrant, where it maintains a rebellion against God all our days. Sometimes it hath more strength, and consequently more success; sometimes less of the one, and of the other, but is always in rebellion whilst we live.

That we may in our passage take a little view of the strength and power of sin from this seat and subject of it; we may consider one or two properties of the heart, that exceedingly contribute thereunto. It is like an enemy in war, whose strength and power lie not only in his numbers, and force of men or arms, but also in the unconquerable forts that he doth possess. And such is the heart to this enemy of God and our souls, as will appear from the properties of it, whereof one or two shall be mentioned.

1. It is unsearchable. Jer. xvii. 9, 10. 'Who can know the heart? I the Lord search it.' The heart of man is pervious to God only; hence he takes the honour of searching the heart, to be as peculiar to himself, and as fully declaring him to be God, as any other glorious attribute of his nature. We know not the hearts of one another, we know not our own hearts as we ought. Many there are that know not their hearts as to their general bent and disposition, whether it be good or bad, sincere and sound, or corrupt and naught; *but no one* knows all the secret intrigues, the windings and

turnings, the actings and aversations of his own heart. Hath any one the perfect measure of his own light and darkness? Can any one know what actings of choosing, or aversation his will will bring forth, upon the proposal of that endless variety of objects that it is to be exercised with? Can any one traverse the various mutability of his affections? Do the secret springs of acting and refusing in the soul, lie before the eyes of any man? Doth any one know what will be the motions of the mind or will, in such and such conjunctions of things? Such a suiting of objects, such a pretension of reasonings, such an appearance of things desirable? All in heaven and earth, but the infinite all-seeing God, are utterly ignorant of these things. In this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin; and much of its security, and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past our finding out. We fight with an enemy whose secret strength we cannot discover, whom we cannot follow into its retirements. Hence oftentimes, when we are ready to think sin quite ruined, after awhile we find it was but out of sight. It hath coverts and retreats in an unsearchable heart, whither we cannot pursue it. The soul may persuade itself all is well, when sin may be safe in the hidden darkness of the mind, which it is impossible that he should look into; for whatever makes manifest is light. It may suppose the will of sinning is utterly taken away, when yet there is an unsearchable reserve for a more suitable object, a more vigorous temptation, than at present it is tried withal. Hath a man had a contest with any lust, and a blessed victory over it by the Holy Ghost, as to that present trial; when he thinks it is utterly expelled, he ere long finds that it was but retired out of sight. It can lie so close in the mind's darkness, in the will's indisposition, in the disorder and carnality of the affections, that no eye can discover it. The best of our wisdom is but to watch its first appearances, to catch its first under-earth heavings and workings, and to set ourselves in opposition to them; for to follow it into the secret corners of the heart, that we cannot do. It is true, there is yet a relief in this case, namely, that he to whom the work of destroying the law of sin, and body of death in us is principally committed, namely, the Holy Ghost, comes with his axe to the very root, neither is there any thing in an unsearchable heart that is not open and naked

unto him, Heb. iv. 12. But we in a way of duty may hence see what an enemy we have to deal withal.

2. As it is unsearchable, so it is deceitful, as in the place above-mentioned; 'it is deceitful above all things,' incomparably so. There is great deceit in the dealings of men in the world, great in their counsels and contrivances in reference to their affairs, private and public; great deceit in their words and actings: the world is full of deceit and fraud. But all this is nothing to the deceit that is in man's heart towards himself; for that is the meaning of the expression in this place, and not towards others. Now incomparable deceitfulness, added to unsearchableness, gives a great addition and increase of strength to the law of sin, upon the account of its seat and subject. I speak not yet of the deceitfulness of sin itself, but the deceitfulness of the heart where it is seated. Prov. xxvi. 25. 'There are seven abominations in the heart;' that is, not only many, but an absolute complete number, as seven denotes. And they are such abominations as consist in deceitfulness; so the caution foregoing insinuates, 'trust him not;' for it is only deceit that should make us not to trust in that degree and measure which the object is capable of.

Now this deceitfulness of the heart, whereby it is exceedingly advantaged in its harbouring of sin, lies chiefly in these two things:

(1.) That it abounds in contradictions, so that it is not to be found and dealt withal, according to any constant rule and way of procedure. There are some men that have much of this from their natural constitution, or from other causes in their conversation. They seem to be made up of contradictions; sometimes to be very wise in their affairs, sometimes very foolish; very open, and very reserved; very facile, and very obstinate; very easy to be entreated, and very revengeful, all in a remarkable height. This is generally accounted a bad character, and is seldom found but when it proceeds from some notable predominant lust. But, in general, in respect of moral good or evil, duty or sin, it is so with the heart of every man; flaming hot, and key cold; weak, and yet stubborn; obstinate, and facile, The frame of the heart is ready to contradict itself every moment. Now you would think you had it all for such a frame, such a way; anon it

is quite otherwise: so that none know what to expect from it. The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all its faculties by sin. God created them all in a perfect harmony and union. The mind and reason were in perfect subjection and subordination to God and his will; the will answered in its choice of good, the discovery made of it by the mind; the affections constantly and evenly followed the understanding and will. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul, and all the wheels in it. That being disturbed by sin, the rest of the faculties move cross and contrary one to another; the will chooseth not the good which the mind discovers; the affections delight not in that which the will chooseth, but all jar and interfere, cross and rebel against each other. This we have got by our falling from God. Hence sometimes the will leads, the judgment follows. Yea, commonly the affections that should attend upon all, get the sovereignty, and draw the whole soul captive after them. And hence it is, as I said, that the heart is made up of so many contradic tions in its actings. Sometimes the mind retains its sovereignty, and the affections are in subjection, and the will ready for its duty. This puts a good face upon things. Immediately the rebellion of the affections, or the obstinacy of the will take place and prevail, and the whole scene is changed. This, I say, makes the heart deceitful above all things; it agrees not at all in itself, is not constant to itself, hath no order that it is constant unto, is under no certain conduct that is stable, but if I may so say, hath a rotation in itself, where ofttimes the feet lead and guide the whole.

(2.) Its deceit lies in its full promisings upon the first appearance of things. And this also proceeds from the same principle with the former. Sometimes the affections are touched and wrought upon, the whole heart appears in a fair frame, all promiseth to be well. Within awhile the whole frame is changed; the mind was not at all affected or turned; the affections a little acted their parts and are gone off, and all the fair promises of the heart are departed with them. Now add this deceitfulness to the unsearchableness before-mentioned, and we shall find, that at least the difficulty of dealing effectually with sin in its seat and throne, will be exceedingly increased. A deceiving and a deceived heart, *who can deal with it?* especially considering that the

heart employs all its deceits unto the service of sin, contributes them all to its furtherance. All the disorder that is in the heart, all its false promises, and fair appearances, promote the interest and advantages of sin. Hence God cautions the people to look to it, lest their own hearts should entice and deceive them.

Who can mention the treacheries and deceits that lie in the heart of man? It is not for nothing that the Holy Ghost so expresseth it, 'it is deceitful above all things;' uncertain in what it doth, and false in what it promiseth. And hence moreover it is, amongst other causes, that in the pursuit of our war against sin, we have not only the old work to go over and over, but new work still while we live in this world; still new stratagems and wiles to deal withal, as the manner will be where unsearchableness and deceitfulness are to be contended with.

There are many other properties of this seat and subject of the law of sin, which might be insisted on to the same end and purpose, but that would too far divert us from our particular design; and therefore I shall pass these over with some few considerations.

First, Never let us reckon that our work in contending against sin, in crucifying, mortifying, and subduing of it, is at an end. The place of its habitation is unsearchable; and when we may think that we have throughly won the field, there is still some reserve remaining that we saw not, that we knew not of. Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory; and many have been spiritually wounded after great successes against this enemy. David was so; his great surprisal into sin was after a long profession, manifold experiences of God, and watchful keeping himself from his iniquity. And hence in part hath it come to pass, that the profession of many hath declined in their old age, or riper time, which must more distinctly be spoken to afterward. They have given over the work of mortifying of sin, before their work was at an end. There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation, but by being endless in our pursuit. And that command of the apostle which we have, Col. iii. 5. on this account is as necessary for them to observe, who are towards the end of their race, as those that are but at the beginning of it. 'Mortify *therefore your members* that are on the earth;' be always

doing it whilst you live in this world. It is true, great ground is obtained, when the work is vigorously and constantly carried on; sin is much weakened, so that the soul presseth forwards towards perfection. But yet the work must be endless, I mean whilst we are in this world. If we give over, we shall quickly see this enemy exerting itself with new strength and vigour. It may be, under some great affliction, it may be, in some eminent enjoyment of God, in the sense of the sweetness of blessed communion with Christ, we have been ready to say, that there was an end of sin, that it was dead and gone for ever. But have we not found the contrary by experience? hath it not manifested that it was only retired into some unsearchable recesses of the heart, as to its inbeing and nature, though it may be greatly weakened in its power? Let us then reckon on it, that there is no way to have our work done, but by always doing of it; and he who dies fighting in this warfare, dies assuredly a conqueror.

Secondly, Hath it its residence in that which is various, inconstant, deceitful above all things? this calls for perpetual watchfulness against it. An open enemy that deals by violence only always gives some respite; you know where to have him, and what he is doing, so as that sometimes you may sleep quietly without fear. But against adversaries that deal by deceit and treachery (which are long swords, and reach at the greatest distance), nothing will give security but perpetual watchfulness. It is impossible we should in this case be too jealous, doubtful, suspicious, or watchful. The heart hath a thousand wiles and deceits, and if we are in the least off from our watch, we may be sure to be surprised. Hence are those reiterated commands and cautions given for watching, for being circumspect, diligent, careful, and the like. There is no living for them who have to deal with an enemy deceitful above all things, unless they persist in such a frame. All cautions that are given in this case are necessary, especially that, remember not to believe. Doth the heart promise fair? rest not on it, but say to the Lord Christ, Lord, do thou undertake for me. Doth the sun shine fair in the morning? reckon not therefore on a fair day; the clouds may arise and fall: though the morning give a fair appearance of serenity and peace, turbulent affections may arise, and cloud the soul with sin and darkness.

Thirdly, then, commit the whole matter with all care and

diligence unto him who can search the heart to the uttermost, and knows how to prevent all its treacheries and deceits. In the things before-mentioned lies our duty, but here lies our safety. There is no treacherous corner in our hearts, but he can search it to the uttermost; there is no deceit in them but he can disappoint it. This course David takes, Psal. cxxxix. After he had set forth the omnipresence of God, and his omniscience, ver. 8—10. he makes improvement of it, ver. 23. 'Search me, O Lord, and try me.' As if he had said, it is but a little that I know of my deceitful heart, only I would be sincere, I would not have reserves for sin retained therein; wherefore do thou, who art present with my heart, who knowest my thoughts long before, undertake this work, perform it throughly, for thou alone art able so to do.

There are yet other arguments for the evidencing of the power and strength of indwelling sin from whence it is termed a law, which we must pass through according to the order wherein before we laid them down.

CHAP. IV.

Indwelling sin enmity against God. Thence its power. Admits of no peace nor rest. Is against God himself. Acts itself in aversation from God; and propensity to evil. Is universal. To all of God. In all of the soul. Constant.

We have seen the seat and subject of this law of sin. In the next place we might take a view of its nature in general, which also will manifest its power and efficacy. But this I shall not enlarge upon; it being not my business to declare the nature of indwelling sin, it hath also been done by others. I shall therefore only in reference unto our special design in hand, consider one property of it, that belongs unto its nature; and this always wherever it is. And this is that which is expressed by the apostle, Rom. viii. 7. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' That which is here called, φρώνημα τῆς σαρκὸς, 'the wisdom of the flesh,' is the same with the law of sin, which we insist on. And what says he hereof? why it is ἔχθρα πρὸς τοὶ θεοὶ, 'enmity against God.' It is not only an enemy, for so possibly some reconciliation of it unto God might be made; but it is enmity itself, and so not capable of accepting any terms of peace. Enemies may be

reconciled, but enmity cannot. Yea, the only way to reconcile enemies, is to destroy the enmity. So the apostle in another case tells us, Rom. v. 10. 'We who were enemies, are reconciled unto God;' that is, a work compassed and brought about by the blood of Christ; the reconciling of the greatest enemies. But when he comes to speak of enmity, there is no way for it, but it must be abolished and destroyed, Eph. ii. 15. 'Having abolished in his flesh the enmity.' There is no way to deal with any enmity whatever, but by its abolition or destruction.

And this also lies in it as it is enmity, that every part and parcel of it, if we may so speak, the least degree of it that can possibly remain in any one, whilst and where there is any thing of its nature, is enmity still. It may not be so effectual and powerful in operation, as where it hath more life and vigour, but it is enmity still. As every drop of poison is poison, and will infect; and every spark of fire is fire, and will burn; so is every thing of the law of sin, the last, the least of it, it is enmity, it will poison, it will burn. That which is any thing in the abstract is still so; whilst it hath any being at all. Our apostle, who may well be supposed to have made as great a progress in the subduing of it, as any one on the earth, yet after all cries out for deliverance, as from an irreconcileable enemy, Rom. vii. 24. The meanest acting, the meanest and most imperceptible working of it, is the acting and working of enmity. Mortification abates of its force, but doth not change its nature. Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin. Whatever effect be wrought upon it, there is no effect wrought in it, but that it is enmity still, sin still. This then by it is our state and condition. 'God is love;' 1 John iv. 8. He is so in himself, eternally excellent, and desirable above all. He is so to us, he is so in the blood of his Son, and in all the inexpressible fruits of it, by which we are what we are, and wherein all our future hopes and expectations are wrapped up. Against this God we carry about us an enmity all our days; an enmity that hath this from its nature, that it is incapable of cure or reconciliation. Destroyed it may be, it shall be, but cured it cannot be. If a man hath an enemy to deal withal that is too mighty for him, as David had with Saul, he may take the course that he did; consider what it is that provoked

his enemy against him, and so address himself to remove the cause and make up his peace. 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. 'If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they of the Lord;' come it from God or man, there is yet hopes of peace. But when a man hath enmity itself to deal withal, nothing is to be expected but continual fighting to the destruction of the one party. If it be not overcome and destroyed, it will overcome and destroy the soul.

And herein lies no small part of its power which we are inquiring after; it can admit of no terms of peace, of no composition. There may be a composition, where there is no reconciliation; there may be a truce, where there is no peace; but with this enemy we can obtain neither the one nor the other. It is never quiet conquering nor conquered which was the only kind of enemy that the famous warrior complained of, of old. It is in vain for a man to have any expectation of rest from his lust, but by its death, of absolute freedom, but by his own. Some in the tumultuating of their corruptions, seek for quietness by labouring to satisfy them, 'making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;' as the apostle speaks, Rom. xiii. 14. This is to aslake fire by wood and oil. As all the fuel in the world, all the fabric of the creation that is combustible, being cast into the fire, will not at all satisfy it, but increase it; so is it with satisfaction given to sin by sinning, it doth but inflame and increase. If a man will part with some of his goods unto an enemy, it may satisfy him; but enmity will have all, and is not one whit the more satisfied, than if he had received nothing at all. Like the lean cattle that were never the less hungry, for having devoured the fat. You cannot bargain with the fire to take but so much of your houses, ye have no way but to quench it. It is in this case, as it is in the contest between a wise man and a fool, Prov. xxix. 9. 'Whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.' Whatever frame or temper he be in, his importunate folly makes him troublesome. It is so with this indwelling sin, whether it violently tumultuate, as it will do on provocations and temptations, it will be outrageous in the soul, or whether it seem to be pleased and contented, to be satisfied, all is one, there is no peace, no rest to be had with it or by it. *Had it then* been of any other nature, some other way

might have been fixed on, but being it consists in enmity, all the relief the soul hath must lie in its ruin.

Secondly, It is not only said to be enmity, but it is said to be 'enmity against God.' It hath chosen a great enemy indeed. It is in sundry places proposed as our enemy: 1 Pet. ii. 11. 'Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' They are enemies to the soul, that is, to ourselves. Sometimes as an enemy to the Spirit that is in us: 'The flesh lusteth' or fighteth 'against the Spirit;' Gal. v. 17. It fights against the Spirit, or the spiritual principle that is in us, to conquer it; it fights against our souls to destroy them. It hath special ends and designs against our souls, and against the principle of grace that is in us; but its proper formal object is God; it is enmity against God. It is its work to oppose grace; it is a consequent of its work to oppose our souls, which follows upon what it doth, more than what it intends; but its nature and formal design is to oppose God; God as the lawgiver, God as holy, God as the author of the gospel, a way of salvation by grace, and not by works, is the direct object of the law of sin. Why doth it oppose duty, so that the good we would do, we do not, either as to matter or manner? Why doth it render the soul carnal, indisposed, unbelieving, unspiritual, weary, wandering? It is because of its enmity to God, whom the soul aims to have communion withal in duty. It hath, as it were, that command from Satan, which the Assyrians had from their king, 'Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel;' 1 Kings xxii. 31. It is neither great nor small, but God himself, the King of Israel, that sin sets itself against. There lies the secret formal reason of all its opposition to good, even because it relates unto God. May a road, a trade, a way of duties be set up, where communion with God is not aimed at, but only the duty itself, as is the manner of men in most of their superstitious worship, the opposition that will lie against it from the law of sin will be very weak, easy, and gentle. Or, as the Assyrians, because of his shew of a king, assaulted Jehosaphat, but when they found that it was not Ahab, they turned back from pursuing of him. Because there is a shew and appearance of the worship of God, sin may make head against it at first, but when the duty cries out in the heart, that indeed God is not *there; sin turns* away to seek out its proper enemy,

even God himself, elsewhere. And hence do many poor creatures spend their days in dismal tiring superstitions, without any great reluctancy from within, when others cannot be suffered freely to watch with Christ in a spiritual manner one hour. And it is no wonder that men fight with carnal weapons for their superstitious worship without, when they have no fighting against it within. For God is not in it; and the law of sin makes not opposition to any duty, but to God in every duty. This is our state and condition; all the opposition that ariseth in us unto any thing that is spiritually good, whether it be from darkness in the mind, or aversation in the will, or sloth in the affections, all the secret arguings and reasonings that are in the soul in pursuit of them, the direct object of them is God himself. The enmity lies against him, which consideration surely should influence us to a perpetual constant watchfulness over ourselves.

It is thus also in respect of all propensity unto sin, as well as aversation from God. It is God himself that is aimed at. It is true, the pleasures, the wages of sin, do greatly influence the sensual carnal affections of men; but it is the holiness and authority of God that sin itself rises up against; it hates the yoke of the Lord; 'Thou hast been weary of me,' saith God to sinners, and that during their performance of abundance of duties. Every act of sin is a fruit of being weary of God. Thus Job tells us what lies at the bottom in the heart of sinners, 'They say to the Lord, Depart from us,' it is enmity against him and aversation from him. Here lies the formal nature of every sin, it is an opposition to God, a casting off his yoke, a breaking off the dependance which the creature ought to have on the Creator. And the apostle, Rom. viii. 7. gives the reason why he affirms 'the carnal mind to be enmity against God,' namely, because 'it is not subject to the will of God, nor indeed can be.' It never is, nor will, nor can be subject to God, its whole nature consisting in an opposition to him. The soul wherein it is may be subject to the law of God, but this law of sin sets up in contrariety unto it, and will not be in subjection.

To manifest a little farther the power of this law of sin from this property of its nature, that it is enmity against God, one or two inseparable adjuncts of it may be considered, which will farther evince it.

1. It is universal. Some contentions are bounded unto

some particular concernments, this is about one thing, that about another. It is not so here; the enmity is absolute and universal, as are all enmities that are grounded in the nature of the things themselves. Such enmity is against the whole kind of that which is its object. Such is this enmity; for (1.) It is universal to all of God; and (2.) It is universal in all of the soul.

(1.) It is universal to all of God. If there were any thing of God, his nature, properties, his mind or will, his law or gospel, any duty of obedience to him, of communion with him, that sin had not an enmity against, the soul might have a constant shelter and retreat within itself, by applying itself to that of God, to that of duty towards him, to that of communion with him, that sin would make no opposition against. But the enmity lies against God, and all of God, and every thing wherein or whereby we have to do with him. It is not subject to the law, nor any part or parcel, word or tittle of the law. Whatever is opposite to any thing as such, is opposite unto all of it. Sin is enmity to God as God, and therefore to all of God. Not his goodness, not his holiness, not his mercy, not his grace, not his promises, there is not any thing of him, which it doth not make head against, nor any duty, private, public, in the heart, in exterternal works, which it opposeth not. And the nearer (if I may so say) any thing is to God, the greater is its enmity unto it. The more of spirituality and holiness is in any thing, the greater is its enmity. That which hath most of God, hath most of its opposition. Concerning them in whom this law is most predominant, God says, 'Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and you would have none of my reproofs;' Prov. i. 25. Not this or that part of God's counsel, his mind or will is opposed, but all his counsel, whatever he calleth for or guideth unto, in every particular of it, all is set at nought, and nothing of his reproof attended unto. A man would think it not very strange that sin should maintain an enmity against God in his law, which comes to judge it, to condemn it; but it raiseth a greater enmity against him in his gospel, wherein he tenders mercy and pardon, as a deliverance from it, and that merely because more of the glorious properties of God's nature, more of his excellencies and condescension, is manifested therein, than in the other.

(2.) It is universal in all of the soul. Would this law of sin have contented itself to have subdued any one faculty of the soul, would it have left any one at liberty, any one affection free from its yoke and bondage, it might possibly have been with more ease opposed or subdued. But when Christ comes with his spiritual power upon the soul to conquer it to himself, he hath no quiet landing place. He can set foot on no ground but what he must fight for and conquer. Not the mind, not an affection, not the will, but all is secured against him. And when grace hath made its entrance; yet sin will dwell in all its coasts. Were any thing in the soul at perfect freedom and liberty, there a stand might be made to drive it from all the rest of its holds; but it is universal and wars in the whole soul. The mind hath its own darkness and vanity to wrestle with; the will its own stubbornness, obstinacy, and perverseness; every affection its own frowardness and aversation from God, and its sensuality to deal withal; so that one cannot yield relief unto one another as they ought; they have, as it were, their hands full at home. Hence it is that our knowledge is imperfect, our obedience weak, love not unmixed, fear not pure, delight not free and noble. But I must not insist on these particulars, or I could abundantly shew how diffused this principle of enmity against God is through the whole soul.

2. Hereunto might be added its constancy; it is constant unto itself, it wavers not, it hath no thoughts of yielding or giving over, notwithstanding the powerful opposition that is made unto it both by the law and gospel, as afterward shall be shewed.

This then is a third evidence of the power of sin, taken from its nature and properties, wherein I have fixed but on one instance for its illustration, namely, that it is enmity against God, and that universal and constant. Should we enter upon a full description of it, it would require more space and time than we have allotted to this whole subject. What hath been delivered might give us a little sense of it, if it be the will of God, and stir us up unto watchfulness. What can be of a more sad consideration than that we should carry about us constantly that which is enmity against God, and that not in this or that particular, but in all that he is, and in all wherein he hath revealed himself? I cannot

say it is well with them who find it not: it is well with them indeed, in whom it is weakened, and the power of it abated. But yet for them who say it is not in them, they do but deceive themselves, and there is no truth in them.

CHAP. V.

Nature of sin farther discovered as it is enmity against God. Its aversation from all good opened. Means to prevent the effects of it prescribed.

We have considered somewhat of the nature of indwelling sin, not absolutely, but in reference unto the discovery of its power. But this more clearly evidenceth itself in its actings and operations. Power is an act of life, and operation is the only discoverer of life. We know not that any thing lives, but by the effects and works of life; and great and strong operations discover a powerful and vigorous life. Such are the operations of this law of sin, which are all demonstrations of its power.

That which we have declared concerning its nature, is that it consists in enmity. Now there are two general heads of the working or operation of enmity: first, Aversation; secondly, Opposition.

First, Aversation. Our Saviour, describing the enmity that was between himself and the teachers of the Jews, by the effects of it, saith in the prophet, 'My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me;' Zech. xi. 8. Where there is mutual enmity, there is mutual aversation, loathing, and abomination. So it was between the Jews and the Samaritans; they were enemies, and abhorred one another; as John iv. 9.

Secondly, Opposition, or contending against one another, is the next product of enmity. Isa. lxiii. 10. 'He was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them;' speaking of God towards the people. Where there is enmity there will be fighting; it is the proper and natural product of it. Now both these effects are found in this law of sin.

First, For aversation; there is an aversation in it unto God, and every thing of God, as we have in part discovered in handling the enmity itself, and so shall not need much to

insist upon it again. All indisposition unto duty, wherein communion with God is to be obtained; all weariness of duty, all carnality or formality unto duty, it all springs from this root. The wise man cautions us against this evil, Eccles. v. 1. 'When thou goest to the house of God, keep thy foot.' Hast thou any spiritual duty to perform, and dost thou design the attaining of any communion with God? look to thyself, take care of thy affections, they will be gadding and wandering, and that from their aversation to what thou hast in hand. There is not any good that we would do, wherein we may not find this aversation exercising itself. 'When I would do good, evil is present with me;' at any time, at all times, when I would do any thing that is spiritually good, it is present; that is, to hinder me, to obstruct me in my duty, because it abhors and loaths the thing which I have in hand, it will keep me off from it if it be possible. In them in whom it prevails, it comes at length unto that frame which is expressed, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. It will allow an outward bodily presence unto the worship of God, wherein it is not concerned, but it keeps the heart quite away.

It may be some will pretend, they find it not so in themselves, but they have freedom and liberty in and unto all the duties of obedience that they attend unto. But I fear this pretended liberty will be found upon examination to arise from one or both of these causes. First, ignorance of the true state and condition of their own souls, of their inward man and its actings towards God. They know not how it is with them, and therefore are not to be believed in what they report. They are in the dark, and neither know what they do, nor whither they are going. It is like the Pharisee knew little of this matter, which made him boast of his duties to God himself; or, secondly, it may be, whatever duties of worship or obedience such persons perform, they may, through want of faith, and an interest in Christ, have no communion with them: and if so, sin will make but little opposition unto them therein. We speak of them, whose hearts are exercised with these things; and if under their complaints of them, and groanings for deliverance from them, others cry out unto them, Stand off, we are holier than ye; they are willing to bear their condition, as knowing

that their way may be safe, though it be troublesome; and being willing to see their own dangers, that they may avoid the ruin which others fall into.

Let us then a little consider this aversation in such acts of obedience, as wherein there is no concernment but that of God and the soul. In public duties there may be a mixture of other considerations; they may be so influenced by custom and necessity, that a right judgment cannot from them be made of this matter; but let us take into consideration the duties of retirement, as private prayer and meditation, and the like; or else extraordinary duties, or duties to be performed in an extraordinary manner.

1. In these will this aversation and loathing oftentimes discover itself in the affections. A secret striving will be in them about close and cordial dealing with God. Unless the hand of God in his Spirit be high and strong upon his soul, even when convictions, sense of duty, dear and real esteem of God, and communion with him, have carried the soul into its closet, yet if there be not the vigour and power of a spiritual life constantly at work, there will be a secret loathness in them unto duty; yea, sometimes there will be a violent inclination to the contrary, so that the soul had rather do any thing, embrace any diversion, though it wound itself thereby, than vigorously apply itself unto that which in the inward man it breathes after. It is weary before it begins, and says, when will the work be over? Here God and the soul are immediately concerned, and it is a great conquest to do what we would, though we come exceedingly short of what we should do.

2. It discovers itself in the mind also: when we address ourselves to God in Christ, we are, as Job speaks, 'to fill our mouths with arguments;' Job xxiii. 4. that we may be able to plead with him, as he calls upon us to do, Isa. xliii. 26. 'Put me in remembrance, let us plead together.' Whence the church is called upon to take unto itself words or arguments in going to God, Hos. xiv. 2. The sum is, that the mind should be furnished with the considerations that are prevailing with God, and be in readiness to plead them, and to manage them in the most spiritual manner to the best advantage. Now is there no difficulty to get the mind into such a frame, as to lay out itself to the utmost in this work?

to be clear, steady, and constant in its duty? to draw out, and make use of its stores and furniture of promises and experiences? It starts, wanders, flags, all from this secret aversation unto communion with God, which proceeds from the law of indwelling sin. Some complain that they can make no work of meditation, they cannot bend their minds unto it. I confess there may be a great cause of this, in their want of a right understanding of the duty itself, and of the ways of managing the soul in it, which therefore I shall a little speak to afterward. But yet this secret enmity hath its hand in the loss they are at also, and that both in their minds and in their affections. Others are forced to live in family and public duties, they find such little benefit and success in private. And here hath been the beginning of the apostacy of many professors, and the source of many foolish sensual opinions. Finding this aversation in their minds and affections from closeness and constancy in private spiritual duties, not knowing how to conquer and prevail against these difficulties, through him who enables us, they have at first been subdued to a neglect of them, first partial, then total, until having lost all conscience of them, they have had a door opened unto all sin and licentiousness, and so to a full and utter apostacy. I am persuaded there are very few that apostatize from a profession of any continuance, such as our days abound withal, but their door of entrance into the folly of backsliding, was either some great and notorious sin that blooded their consciences, tainted their affections, and intercepted all delight of having any thing more to do with God; or else it was a course of neglect in private duties, arising from a weariness of contending against that powerful aversation which they found in themselves unto them. And this also, through the craft of Satan, hath been improved into many foolish and sensual opinions, of living unto God without, and above, any duties of communion. And we find, that after men have for awhile choked and blinded their consciences with this pretence, cursed wickedness or sensuality hath been the end of their folly. And the reason of all this is, that the giving way to the law of sin in the least, is the giving strength unto it: to let it alone is to let it grow, not to conquer it is to be conquered *by it.*

As it is in respect of private, so it is also in respect of public duties, that have any thing extraordinary in them. What strivings, strugglings, and pleadings are there in the heart about them, especially against the spirituality of them? Yea, in and under them, will not the mind and affections sometimes be entangled with things uncouth, new, and strange unto them, such as at the time of the least serious business, a man would not deign to take into his thoughts? But if the least loose, liberty, or advantage be given unto indwelling sin, if it be not perpetually watched over, it will work to a strange and unexpected issue. In brief, let the soul unclothe any duty whatever, private or public, any thing that is called good, let a man divest it of all outward respects which secretly insinuate themselves into the mind and give it some complacency in what it is about, but do not render it acceptable unto God, and he shall assuredly find somewhat of the power and some of the effects of this aversation. It begins in loathness and indisposition, goes on with entangling the mind and affections with other things, and will end, if not prevented, in weariness of God, which he complains of in his people, Isa. xliii. 22. They ceased from duty because they were weary of God.

But this instance being of great importance unto professors in their walking with God, we must not pass it over without some intimations of directions for them in their contending against it, and opposition to it. Only this must be premised, that I am not giving directions for the mortifying of indwelling sin in general, which is to be done alone by the Spirit of Christ, by virtue of our union with him, Rom. viii. 13. but only of our particular duty, with reference unto this especial evil or effect of indwelling sin that we have a little insisted on, or what in this single case the wisdom of faith seems to direct unto and call for; which will be our way and course in our process upon the consideration of other effects of it.

1. The great means to prevent the fruits and effects of this aversation, is the constant keeping of the soul in a universally holy frame. As this weakens the whole law of sin, so answerably all its properties; and particularly this aversation. It is this frame only that will enable us to say with the psalmist, Psal. lvii. 7. 'My heart is fixed, O God, my

heart is fixed.' It is utterly impossible to keep the heart in a prevailing holy frame in any one duty, unless it be so in and unto all and every one. If sin entanglements get hold in any one thing, they will put themselves upon the soul in every thing. A constant even frame and temper in all duties, in all ways, is the only preservative for any one way. Let not him who is neglective in public persuade himself that all will be clear and easy in private, or on the contrary. There is a harmony in obedience; break but one part and you interrupt the whole. Our wounds in particular arise generally from negligence as to the whole course. So David informs us, Psal. cxix. 6. 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect unto all thy commandments.' A universal respect to all God's commandments is the only preservative from shame. And nothing have we more reason to be ashamed of, than the shameful miscarriages of our hearts in point of duty, which are from the principle before mentioned.

2. Labour to prevent the very beginnings of the workings of this aversation; let grace be beforehand with it in every duty. We are directed, 1 Pet. iv. 7. to 'watch unto prayer;' and as it is unto prayer, so unto every duty; that is, to consider and take care that we be not hindered from within, nor from without as to a due performance of it. Watch against temptations to oppose them; watch against the aversation that is in sin to prevent it. As we are not to give place to Satan, no more are we to sin. If it be not prevented in its first attempts, it will prevail. My meaning is, whatever good, as the apostle speaks, we have to do, and find evil present with us, as we shall find it present, prevent its parlying with the soul, its insinuating of poison into the mind and affections, by a vigorous, holy, violent stirring up of the grace or graces that are to be acted and set at work peculiarly in that duty. Let Jacob come first into the world, or, if prevented by the violence of Esau, let him lay hold on his heel to overthrow him, and obtain the birthright. Upon the very first motion of Peter to our Saviour, crying, 'Master, spare thyself,' he immediately replies, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' So ought we to say, Get thee gone, thou law of sin, thou present evil, and it may be of the same use unto us. Get grace then up betimes unto duty, and be early in the rebukes of sin.

3. Though it do its worst, yet be sure it never prevail to a conquest. Be sure you be not wearied out by its pertinacity, nor driven from your hold by its importunity; do not faint by its opposition. Take the apostle's advice, Heb. vi. 11. 'We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful.' Still hold out in the same diligence. There are many ways whereby men are driven from a constant holy performance of duties, all of them dangerous, if not pernicious to the soul. Some are diverted by business, some by company, some by the power of temptations, some discouraged by their own darkness; but none so dangerous as this, when the soul gives over in part, or in whole, as wearied by the aversation of sin unto it, or to communion with God in it. This argues the soul's giving up of itself unto the power of sin, which, unless the Lord break the snare of Satan therein, will assuredly prove ruinous. Our Saviour's instruction is, that 'we ought always to pray, and not to faint;' Luke xviii. 1. Opposition will arise, none so bitter and keen as that from our own hearts; if we faint we perish. 'Take heed lest you be wearied,' saith the apostle, 'and faint in your minds;' Heb. xii. 3. Such a fainting as is attended with a weariness, and that with a giving place to the aversation working in our hearts, is to be avoided if we would not perish. The caution is the same with that of the same apostle, Rom. xii. 12. 'Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.' And in general with that of chap. vi. 12. 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof.' To cease from duty, in part or in whole, upon the aversation of sin unto its spirituality, is to give sin the rule and to obey it in the lust thereof. Yield not then unto it, but hold out the conflict; wait on God and ye shall prevail. Isa. xl. 31. 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.' But that which is now so difficult, will increase in difficulty if we give way unto it. But if we abide in our station, we shall prevail; the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

4. Carry about a constant humbling sense of this close aversation unto spiritualness that yet lies in our nature. If men find the efficacy of it, what should, what consideration

can, be more powerful to bring them unto humble walking with God. That after all the discoveries that God hath made of himself unto them, all the kindness they have received from him, his doing of them good and not evil in all things, there should yet be such a heart of unkindness and unbelief still abiding, as to have an aversation lying in it to communion with him. How ought the thoughts of it to cast us into the dust, to fill us with shame and self-abhorrency all our days? What have we found in God in any of our approaches or addresses unto him, that it should be thus with us? What iniquity have we found in him? Hath he been a wilderness unto us, or a land of darkness? Did we ever lose any thing by drawing nigh unto him? Nay, hath not therein lain all the rest and peace which we have obtained? Is not he the fountain and spring of all our mercies, of all our desirable things? Hath he not bid us welcome at our coming? Have we not received from him more than heart can conceive or tongue express? What ails then our foolish and wretched hearts, to harbour such a cursed secret dislike of him and his ways? Let us be ashamed and astonished at the consideration of it, and walk in an humbling sense of it all our days. Let us carry it about with us in the most secret of our thoughts. And as this is a duty in itself acceptable unto God, who delights to dwell with them that are of an humble and contrite spirit, so it is of exceeding efficacy to the weakening of the evil we treat of.

5. Labour to possess the mind with the beauty and excellency of spiritual things, that so they may be presented lovely and desirable to the soul, and this cursed aversation of sin will be weakened thereby. It is an innate acknowledged principle, that the soul of man will not keep up cheerfully unto the worship of God, unless it have a discovery of a beauty and comeliness in it. Hence, when men had lost all spiritual sense and favour of the things of God, to supply the want that was in their own souls, they invented outwardly pompous and gorgeous ways of worship, in images, paintings, pictures, and I know not what carnal ornaments which they have called the beauties of holiness. Thus much however was discovered therein, that the mind of man must see a beauty, a desirableness in the things of God's worship, or it will not delight in it; aversation will prevail. Let then the soul labour to acquaint itself with the

spiritual beauty of obedience, of communion with God, and of all duties of immediate approach to him, that it may be filled with delight in them. It is not my present work to discover the heads and springs of that beauty and desirableness which is in spiritual duties, in their relation to God, the eternal spring of all beauty; to Christ, the love, desire, and hope of all nations; to the Spirit, the great beautifier of souls, rendering them by his grace all glorious within, in their suitableness to the souls of men, as to their actings towards their last end, in the rectitude and holiness of the rule in attendance whereunto they are to be performed; but I only say at present in general, that to acquaint the soul throughly with these things is an eminent way of weakening the aversation spoken of.

CHAP. VI.

The work of this enmity against God, by way of opposition. First, It lusteth. Wherein the lusting of sin consisteth. Its surprising of the soul. Readiness to close with temptations. Its fighting and warring. 1. *In Rebellion against the law of grace.* 2. *In assaulting the soul.*

How this enmity worketh by way of aversation hath been declared, as also the means that the soul is to use for the preventing of its effects and prevalency. The second way whereby it exerts itself is opposition. Enmity will oppose and contend with that wherewith it is at enmity. It is so in things natural and moral. As light and darkness, heat and cold, so virtue and vice oppose each other. So is it with sin and grace; saith the apostle, 'These are contrary one to the other;' Gal. v. 17. ἀντίκειται ἀλλήλοις, they are placed and set in mutual opposition, and that continually and constantly, as we shall see.

Now there are two ways whereby enemies manage an opposition. First, By force; and secondly, By fraud and deceit. So when the Egyptians became enemies to the children of Israel, and managed an enmity against them, Exod. i. 10. Pharaoh saith, 'Let us deal wisely,' or rather cunningly and subtilely 'with this people;' for so Stephen, with respect to this word, expresseth it, Acts vii. 19. by κατασοφισάμενος, he

used 'all manner of fraudulent sophistry.' And unto this deceit they added force, in their grievous oppressions. This is the way and manner of things where there is a prevailing enmity: and both these are made use of by the law of sin, in its enmity against God, and our souls.

I shall begin with the first; or its actings as it were in a way of force, in an open downright opposition to God and his law, or the good that a believing soul would do in obedience unto God and his law. And in this whole matter, we must be careful to steer our course aright, taking the Scripture for our guide, with spiritual reason and experience for our companions; for there are many shelves in our course, which must diligently be avoided, that none who consider these things be troubled without cause, or comforted without a just foundation.

In this first way, whereby this sin exerts its enmity in opposition, namely, as it were by force or strength, there are four things expressing so many distinct degrees in its progress and procedure in the pursuit of its enmity.

First, Its general inclination, 'it lusteth;' Gal. v. 17.

Secondly, Its particular way of contending; it fights or wars; Rom. vii. 23. James iv. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 11.

Thirdly, Its success in this contest; 'it brings the soul into captivity to the law of sin;' Rom. vii. 23.

Fourthly, Its growth and rage upon success; it comes up to madness, as an enraged enemy will do; Eccles. ix. 3. All which we must speak to in order.

First, In general it is said to lust. Gal. v. 17. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.' This word expresseth the general nature of that opposition which the law of sin maketh against God, and the rule of his Spirit or grace in them that believe; and therefore, the least degree of that opposition is expressed hereby. When it doth any thing it lusteth. As because burning is the general acting of fire, whatever it doth else, it doth also burn. When fire doth any thing, it burns; and when the law of sin doth any thing, it lusts.

Hence all the actings of this law of sin are called the 'lusts of the flesh.' Gal. v. 16. 'Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' Rom. xiii. 14. 'Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Nor are these lusts of the flesh those only whereby men act their sensuality in riot,

drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like; but they comprehend all the actings of the law of sin whatever, in all the faculties and affections of the soul. Thus, Eph. ii. 3. we have mention of the desires, or wills, or lusts of the mind, as well as of the flesh. The mind, the most spiritual part of the soul, hath its lusts, no less than the sensual appetite, which seems sometimes more properly to be called the flesh. And in the products of these lusts, there are defilements of the spirit, as well as of the flesh, 2 Cor. vii. 1. that is, of the mind and understanding, as well of the appetite and affections, and the body that attends their service. And in the blamelessness of all these consists our holiness, 1 Thess. v. 23. 'The God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Yea, by the flesh in this matter the whole old man, or the law of sin, is intended, John iii. 6. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh;' that is, it is all so, and nothing else: and whatever remains of the old nature in the new man is flesh still. And this flesh lusteth; this law of sin doth so, which is the general bottom and foundation of all its opposition unto God. And this it doth two ways.

1. In a hidden close propensity unto all evil. This lies in it habitually. Whilst a man is in the state of nature, fully under the power and dominion of this law of sin, it is said, that 'every figment of his heart is evil, and that continually;' Gen. vi. 5. It can frame, fashion, produce, or act nothing but what is evil, because this habitual propensity unto evil, that is in the law of sin, is absolutely predominant in such a one. It is in the heart like poison, that hath nothing to allay its venomous qualities, and so infects whatever it touches: and where the power and dominion of it is broken, yet in its own nature it hath still an habitual propensity unto that which is evil, wherein its lusting doth consist.

But here we must distinguish between the habitual frame of the heart, and the natural propensity or habitual inclination of the law of sin in the heart. The habitual inclination of the heart is denominated from the principle that bears chief or sovereign rule in it; and therefore in believers it is unto good, unto God, unto holiness, unto obedience. The heart is not habitually inclined unto evil by the remain-

ders of indwelling sin, but this sin in the heart hath a constant habitual propensity unto evil in itself, or its own nature. This the apostle intends by its being present with us; it 'is present with me;' that is, always, and for its own end, which is to lust unto sin.

It is with indwelling sin as with a river; whilst the springs and fountains of it are open, and waters are continually supplied unto its streams, set a dam before it, and it causeth it to rise and swell, until it bear down all, or overflow the banks about it. Let these waters be abated, dried up in some good measure, in the springs of them, and the remainder may be coerced and restrained: but still as long as there is any running water, it will constantly press upon what stands before it, according to its weight and strength, because it is its nature so to do; and if by any means it make a passage, it will proceed. So is it with indwelling sin; whilst the springs and fountains of it are open, in vain is it for men to set a dam before it by their convictions, resolutions, vows, and promises. They may check it for awhile, but it will increase, rise high, and rage at one time or another, until it bears down all those convictions and resolutions, or makes itself an underground passage by some secret lust, that shall give a full vent unto it. But now suppose that the springs of it are much dried up by regenerating grace, the streams or actings of it abated by holiness, yet whilst any thing remains of it, it will be pressing constantly to have vent, to press forward into actual sin; and this is its lusting.

And this habitual propensity in it is discovered two ways.

(1.) In its unexpected surprisals of the soul into foolish sinful figments and imaginations which it looked not for, nor was any occasion administered unto them. It is with indwelling sin as it is with the contrary principle of sanctifying grace. This gives the soul, if I may so say, many a blessed surprisal. It oftentimes ingenerates and brings forth a holy spiritual frame in the heart and mind, when we have had no previous rational considerations to work them thereunto. And this manifests it to be an habitual principle prevailing in the mind: so Cant. vi. 12. 'Or ever I was aware my soul made me as the chariots of Amminadib;' that is, free, willing, and ready for communion with Christ. לא ידעתי, I knew not, it

was done by the power of the Spirit of grace, so that I took no notice of it, as it were, until it was done. The frequent actings of grace in this manner, exciting acts of faith, love, and complacency in God, are evidences of much strength and prevalency of it in the soul. And thus also is it with indwelling sin; ere the soul is aware, without any provocation or temptation, when it knows not, it is cast into a vain and foolish frame. Sin produceth its figments secretly in the heart, and prevents the mind's consideration of what it is about. I mean hereby those 'actus primo primi,' first acts of the soul, which are thus far involuntary, as that they have not the actual consent of the will unto them, but are voluntary, as far as sin hath its residence in the will. And these surprisals, if the soul be not awake to take speedy care for the prevention of their tendency, do oftentimes set all as it were on fire, and engage the mind and affections into actual sin. For, as by grace we are oftentimes, ere we are aware, made as the chariots of a willing people, and are far engaged in heavenly-mindedness and communion with Christ, making speed in it as in a chariot, so by sin are we oftentimes, ere we are aware, carried into distempered affections, foolish imaginations, and pleasing delightfulness in things that are not good nor profitable. Hence is that caution of the apostle, Gal. 6. 1. ἐὰν προλημφθῇ, if a man be surprised at unawares with a fault or in a transgression. I doubt not but the subtlety of Satan and the power of temptation are here taken into consideration by the apostle, which causeth him to express a man's falling into sin, by ἐὰν προληφθῇ, 'if he be surprised;' so this working of indwelling sin also hath its consideration in it, and that in the chiefest place, without which nothing else could surprise us. For without the help thereof, whatever comes from without, from Satan, or the world, must admit of some parley in the mind before it be received, but it is from within, from ourselves, that we are surprised. Hereby are we disappointed and wrought over to do that which we would not, and hindered from the doing of that which we would.

Hence it is, that when the soul is oftentimes doing as it were quite another thing, engaged quite upon another design, sin starts that in the heart or imaginations of it, that carries it away into that which is evil and sinful. Yea, to manifest

its power, sometimes when the soul is seriously engaged in the mortification of any sin, it will, by one means or other, lead it away into a dalliance with that very sin whose ruin it is seeking, and whose mortification it is engaged in. But as there is in this operation of the law of sin, a special enticing or entangling, we shall speak unto it fully afterward. Now these surprisals can be from nothing but an habitual propensity unto evil in the principle from whence they proceed. Not an habitual inclination unto actual sin in the mind or heart, but an habitual propensity unto evil in the sin that is in the mind or heart. This prevents the soul with its figments. How much communion with God is hereby prevented, how many meditations are disturbed, how much the minds and consciences of men have been defiled by this acting of sin, some may have observed. I know no greater burden in the life of a believer, than these involuntary surprisals of soul; involuntary, I say, as to the actual consent of the will, but not so in respect of that corruption which is in the will, and is the principle of them. And it is in respect unto these, that the apostle makes his complaint, Rom. vii. 24.

(2.) This habitual inclination manifests itself in its readiness and promptness, without dispute or altercation, to join and close with every temptation whereby it may possibly be excited. As we know it is in the nature of fire to burn, because it immediately lays hold on whatever is combustible. Let any temptation whatever be proposed unto a man, the suitableness of whose matter unto his corruptions, or manner of its proposal, makes it a temptation; immediately he hath not only to do with the temptation as outwardly proposed, but also with his own heart about it. Without farther consideration or debate, the temptation hath got a friend in him. Not a moment's space is given between the proposal and the necessity there is incumbent on the soul to look to its enemy within. And this also argues a constant habitual propensity unto evil. Our Saviour said of the assaults and temptations of Satan, 'The prince of this world cometh, and he hath no part in me;' John xiv. 30. He had more temptations intensively and extensively, in number, quality, and fierceness, from Satan and the world, than ever had any of the sons of men: but yet in all of them he had to deal only with that which came from without. His holy heart had nothing to

like them, suited to them, or ready to give them entertainment; 'the prince of this world had nothing in him.' So it was with Adam; when a temptation befell him, he had only the outward proposal to look unto; all was well within, until the outward temptation took place and prevailed. With us it is not so.

In a city that is at unity in itself, compact and entire, without divisions and parties, if an enemy approach about it, the rulers and inhabitants have no thoughts at all but only how they may oppose the enemy without, and resist him in his approaches. But if the city be divided in itself, if there be factions and traitors within, the very first thing they do, is to look to the enemies at home, the traitors within; to cut off the head of Sheba, if they will be safe. All was well with Adam within doors, when Satan came, so that he had nothing to do but to look to his assaults and approaches. But now, on the access of any temptation, the soul is instantly to look in, where it shall find this traitor at work, closing with the baits of Satan, and stealing away the heart. And this it doth always, which evinceth an habitual inclination. Psal. xxxviii. 17. saith David, 'I am ready to halt,' or for halting; כי אני לצלע נכון, I am prepared and disposed unto hallucination, to the slipping of my foot into sin, verse 16. as he expounds the meaning of that phrase, Psal. lxxiii. 2. 3. There was from indwelling sin a continual disposition in him to be slipping, stumbling, halting on every occasion or temptation. There is nothing so vain, foolish, ridiculous, fond, nothing so vile and abominable, nothing so atheistical or execrable, but if it be proposed unto the soul in a way of temptation, there is that in this law of sin which is ready to answer it, before it be decried by grace. And this is the first thing in this lusting of the law of sin, it consists in its habitual propensity unto evil, manifesting itself by the involuntary surprisals of the soul unto sin, and its readiness, without dispute or consideration, to join in all temptations whatever.

2. Its lusting consists in its actual pressing after that which is evil, and actual opposition unto that which is good. The former instances shewed its constant readiness to this work; this now treats of the work itself. It is not only ready, but for the most part always engaged. It lusteth, saith the Holy Ghost, it doth so continually. It stirreth in the soul by one act or other constantly, almost as the

spirits in the blood, or the blood in the veins. This the apostle calls its tempting, James i. 14. 'Every man is tempted of his own lust.' Now what is it to be tempted? It is to have that proposed to a man's consideration, which if he close withal, it is evil, it is sin unto him. This is sin's trade; ἐπιθυμεῖ, 'it lusteth.' It is raising up in the heart, and proposing unto the mind and affections that which is evil; trying, as it were, whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it will carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. Now when such a temptation comes from without, it is unto the soul an indifferent thing, neither good nor evil unless it be consented unto. But the very proposal from within, it being the soul's own act, is its sin. And this is the work of the law of sin; it is restlessly and continually raising up and proposing innumerable various forms and appearances of evil, in this or that kind, indeed in every kind that the nature of man is capable to exercise corruption in. Something or other, in matter, or manner, or circumstance, inordinate, unspiritual, unanswerable unto the rule, it hatcheth and proposeth unto the soul. And this power of sin to beget figments and ideas of actual evil in the heart the apostle may have respect unto, 1 Thess. v. 22. ἀπὸ παντὸς εἴδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε, 'Keep yourselves from every figment or idea of sin in the heart;' for the word there used doth not any where signify an outward form or appearance; neither is it the appearance of evil, but an evil idea or figment that is intended. And this lusting of sin is that which the prophet expresseth in wicked men, in whom the law of it is predominant, Isa. lvii. 20. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' A similitude most lively, expressing the lustings of the law of sin, restlessly and continually bubbling up in the heart, with wicked, foolish, and filthy imaginations and desires. This then is the first thing in the opposition that this enmity makes to God, namely, in its general inclination, it lusteth.

Secondly, There is its particular way of contending, it fights or wars; that is, it acts with strength and violence, as men do in war. First, it lusts, stirring and moving inordinate figments in the mind, desires in the appetite and the affections, proposing them to the will. But it rests not there, it

cannot rest; it urgeth, presseth, and pursueth its proposals with earnestness, strength, and vigour, fighting and contending, and warring to obtain its end and purpose. Would it merely stir up and propose things to the soul, and immediately acquiesce in the sentence and judgment of the mind that the thing is evil, against God and his will, and not farther to be insisted on; much sin might be prevented that is now produced. But it rests not here, it proceeds to carry on its design, and that with earnestness and contention. By this means, wicked men inflame themselves, Isa. lvii. 5. They are self-inflamers, as the word signifies, unto sin, every spark of sin is cherished in them until it grows into a flame, and so it will do in others where it is so cherished.

Now this fighting or warring of sin, consists in two things.

1. In its rebellion against grace, or the law of the mind.

2. In its assaulting the soul, contending for rule and sovereignty over it.

The first is expressed by the apostle, Rom vii. 23. 'I find,' says he, 'another law,' *ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νομῷ τοῦ νοὸς μου*, 'rebelling against the law of my mind.' There are, it seems, two laws in us, the law of the flesh, or of sin; and the law of the mind, or of grace. But contrary laws cannot both obtain sovereign power over the same person, at the same time. The sovereign power in believers, is in the hand of the law of grace; so the apostle declares, ver. 22. 'I delight in the law of God in the inward man.' Obedience unto this law is performed with delight and complacency in the inward man, because its authority is lawful and good. So more expressly, chap. vi. 14. 'For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace.' Now to war against the law that hath a just sovereignty, is to rebel; and so *ἀντιστρατεύεσθαι* signifies; it is to rebel, and ought to have been so translated, 'rebelling against the law of my mind.' And this rebellion consists in a stubborn, obstinate opposition unto the commands and directions of the law of grace. Doth the 'law of the mind,' command any thing as duty? doth it severely rise up against any thing that is evil? When the lusting of the law of sin rises up to this degree, it contends against obedience with all its might, the effect whereof, as the apostle tells us, is 'the

doing of that which we would not, and the not doing of that which we would;' ver. 15, 16. And we may gather a notable instance of the power of sin in this its rebellion from this place. The law of grace prevails upon the will, so that it would do that which is good. 'To will is present with me;' ver. 18. 'When I would do good;' ver. 21. And again, ver. 19. 'And I would not do evil.' And it prevails upon the understanding, so that it approves or disapproves according to the dictates of the law of grace. Ver. 16. 'I consent unto the law that it is good;' and ver. 15. The judgment always lies on the side of grace. It prevails also on the affections, ver. 22. 'I delight in the law of God in the inward man.' Now if this be so, that grace hath the sovereign power in the understanding, will, and affections, whence is it that it doth not always prevail, that we do not always do that which we would, and abstain from that which we would not? Is it not strange that a man should not do that which he chooseth, willeth, liketh, delighteth in? Is there any thing more required to enable us unto that which is good? The law of grace doth all as much as can be expected from it, that which in itself is abundantly sufficient for the perfecting of all holiness in the fear of the Lord. But here lies the difficulty, in the entangling opposition that is made by the rebellion of this law of sin. Neither is it expressible with what vigour and variety sin acts itself in this matter. Sometimes it proposeth diversions, sometimes it causeth weariness, sometimes it finds out difficulties, sometimes it stirs up contrary affections, sometimes it begets prejudices, and one way or other entangles the soul, so that it never suffers grace to have an absolute and complete success in any duty. Ver. 18. τὸ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐκ εὑρίσκω, 'I find not the way perfectly to work out, or accomplish that which is good;' so the word signifies; and that from this opposition and resistance that is made by the law of sin. Now this rebellion appears in two things.

(1.) In the opposition that it makes unto the general purpose and course of the soul.

(2.) In the opposition it makes unto particular duties.

(1.) In the opposition it makes to the general purpose and course of the soul. There is none in whom is the Spirit of Christ, that is his, but it is his general design and pur-

pose to walk in a universal conformity unto him in all things. Even from the inward frame of the heart, to the whole compass of his outward actions, so it is with him. This God requires in his covenant, Gen. xvii. 1. 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect. Accordingly his design is to walk before God, and his frame is sincerity and uprightness therein. This is called, 'Cleaving unto the Lord with purpose of heart,' Acts xi. 23. that is, in all things, and that not with a slothful, dead, ineffectual purpose, but such as is operative, and sets the whole soul at work in pursuit of it. This the apostle sets forth, Phil. iii. 12—14. 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' He useth three words excellently expressing the soul's universal pursuit of this purpose of heart in cleaving unto God; first, saith he, διώκω, ver. 12. 'I follow after,' prosecute; the word signifies properly to persecute, which with what earnestness and diligence it is usually done, we know. Secondly, ἐπεκτείνομαι, 'I reach forward,' reaching with great intention of spirit and affections. It is a great and constant endeavour that is expressed in that word. Thirdly, κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω, say we, 'I press towards the mark,' that is, even as men that are running for a prize. All set forth the vigour, earnestness, diligence, and constancy that is used in the pursuit of this purpose. And this the nature of the principle of grace requireth in them in whom it is. But yet we see with what failings, yea fallings, their pursuit of this course is attended. The frame of the heart is changed, the heart is stolen away, the affections entangled, eruptions of unbelief and distempered passions discovered, carnal wisdom with all his attendencies are set on work; all contrary to the general principle and purpose of the soul. And all this is from the rebellion of this law of sin, stirring up and provoking the heart unto disobedience. The prophet gives this character of hypocrites, Hos. x. 2. 'Their heart is divided, therefore shall they be found faulty.' Now though this be wholly so in respect of

the mind and judgment in hypocrites only, yet it is partially so in the best, in the sense described. They have a division, not of the heart, but in the heart; and thence it is that they are so often found faulty. So saith the apostle, 'so that we cannot do the things that we would;' Gal. v. 17. We cannot accomplish the design of close walking according to the law of grace, because of the contrariety and rebellion of this law of sin.

(2.) It rebels also in respect unto particular duties. It raiseth a combustion in the soul against the particular commands and designings of the law of grace. 'You cannot do the things that you would;' that is, the duties which you judge incumbent on you, which you approve and delight in, in the inward man, you cannot do them as you would. Take an instance in prayer. A man addresseth himself unto that duty; he would not only perform it, but he would perform it in that manner that the nature of the duty, and his own condition do require. He would 'pray in the spirit,' fervently, 'with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered;' in faith, with love and delight, pouring forth his soul unto the Lord; this he aims at. Now oftentimes he shall find a rebellion, a fighting of the law of sin in this matter. He shall find difficulty to get any thing done, who thought to do all things. I do not say, that it is thus always, but it is so when sin wars and rebels, which expresseth an especial acting of its power. Woful entanglements do poor creatures oftentimes meet withal upon this account. Instead of that free enlarged communion with God that they aim at, the best that their souls arrive unto, is but to go away mourning for their folly, deadness and indisposition. In a word, there is no command of the law of grace that is known, liked of, and approved by the soul, but when it comes to be observed, this law of sin one way or other makes head and rebels against it. And this is the first way of its fighting.

2. It doth not only rebel and resist, but it assaults the soul; it sets upon the law of the mind and grace, which is the second part of its warring, 1 Pet. ii. 11. στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς, 'they fight,' or war 'against the soul.' James iv. 1. στρατεύονται ἐν τοῖς μελέσιν ὑμῶν, 'they fight' or war 'in your members.' Peter shews what they oppose and fight against, namely, the soul, and the law of grace

therein. James, what they fight with, or by, namely, the members, or the corruption that is in our mortal bodies. Ἀνταστρατεύεσθαι is to rebel against a superior; στρατεύεσθαι is to assault or war for a superiority. It takes the part of an assailant as well as of a resister. It makes attempts for rule and sovereignty, as well as opposeth the rule of grace. Now all war and fighting hath somewhat of violence in it, and there is therefore some violence in that acting of sin, which the Scripture calls fighting and warring: and this assailing efficacy of sin, as distinguished from its rebelling before treated of, consists in these things that ensue.

(1.) All its positive actings, in stirring up unto sin, belong to this head. Oftentimes, by the vanity of the mind, or the sensuality of the affections, the folly of the imaginations, it sets upon the soul then, when the law of grace is not actually putting it on duty, so that therein it doth not rebel, but assault. Hence the apostle cries out, Rom. vii. 24. 'Who shall deliver me from it?' who shall rescue me out of its hand, as the word signifies. When we pursue an enemy, and he resists us, we do not cry out, Who shall deliver us? for we are the assailants; but, Who shall rescue me? is the cry of one who is set upon by an enemy. So it is here; a man is assaulted by his own lusts, as James speaks: by the way-side, in his employment, under a duty, sin sets upon the soul with vain imaginations, foolish desires, and would willingly employ the soul to make provision for its satisfaction, which the apostle cautions us against, Rom. xiii. 14. τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίας, do not accomplish the providence or projection of the flesh, for its own satisfaction.

(2.) Its importunity and urgency seems to be noted in this expression of its warring. Enemies in war are restless, pressing, and importunate: so is the law of sin. Doth it set upon the soul? cast off its motions, it returns again; rebuke them by the power of grace, they withdraw for awhile, and return again. Set before them the cross of Christ, they do as those that came to take him, at sight of him they went backwards, and fell unto the ground, but they arose again, and laid hands on him. Sin gives place for a season, but returns, and presseth on the soul again. Mind it of the love of God in Christ, though it be stricken, yet it gives

not over. Present hell-fire unto it, it rusheth into the midst of those flames: reproach it with its folly and madness, it knows no shame, but presseth on still. Let the thoughts of the mind strive to fly from it, it follows as on the wings of the wind. And by this importunity it wearies and wears out the soul; and if the great remedy, Rom. viii. 13. come not timely, it prevails to a conquest. There is nothing more marvellous nor dreadful in the working of sin, than this of its importunity. The soul knows not what to make of it; it dislikes, abhors, abominates the evil it tends unto, it despiseth the thoughts of it, hates them as hell, and yet is by itself imposed on with them, as if it were another person, an express enemy got within him. All this the apostle discovers, Rom. vii. 15—17. 'The things that I do, I hate;' it is not of outward actions, but the inward risings of the mind that he treats. 'I hate them,' saith he, 'I abominate them:' but why then will he have any thing more to do with them? If he hate them, and abhor himself for them, let them alone, have no more to do with them, and so end the matter. Alas! saith he, ver. 17. 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' I have one within me that is my enemy, that with endless restless importunity puts these things upon me, even the things that I hate and abominate; I cannot be rid of them, I am weary of myself, I cannot fly from them; 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?' I do not say that this is the ordinary condition of believers, but thus it is often, when this law of sin riseth up to war and fighting. It is not thus with them in respect of particular sins, this or that sin, outward sins, sins of life and conversation; but yet in respect of vanity of mind, inward and spiritual distempers, it is often so. Some, I know, pretend to great perfection, but I am resolved to believe the apostle before them all and every one.

(3.) It carries on its war by entangling of the affections, and drawing them into a combination against the mind. Let grace be enthroned in the mind and judgment, yet if the law of sin lays hold upon, and entangles the affections, or any of them, it hath gotten a fort, from whence it continually assaults the soul. Hence the great duty of mortification is chiefly directed to take place upon the affections, Col. iii. 5. 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon

the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.' The members that are upon the earth are our affections: for in the outward part of the body sin is not seated; in particular, not covetousness, which is there enumerated to be mortified amongst our members that are on the earth. Yea, after grace hath taken possession of the soul, the affections do become the principal seat of the remainders of sin; and therefore Paul saith, that this law is in our members, Rom. vii. 23. and James, that it wars in our members, chap. iv. 1. that is, our affections. And there is no estimate to be taken of the work of mortification aright, but by the affections. We may every day see persons of very eminent light, that yet visibly have unmortified hearts and conversations; their affections have not been crucified with Christ. Now then when this law of sin can possess any affection, whatever it be, love, delight, fear, it will make from it, and by it, fearful assaults upon the soul. For instance; hath it got the love of any one entangled with the world, or the things of it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life; how will it take advantage on every occasion to break in upon the soul: it shall do nothing, attempt nothing, be in no place or company, perform no duty, private or public, but sin will have one blow or other at it; it will be one way or other soliciting for itself.

This is the sum of what we shall offer unto this acting of the law of sin, in a way of fighting and warring against our souls, which is so often mentioned in the Scripture; and a due consideration of it is of no small advantage unto us, especially to bring us unto self-abasement, to teach us to walk humbly and mournfully before God. There are two things that are suited to humble the souls of men; and they are, first, a due consideration of God, and then of themselves. Of God, in his greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty, and authority; of ourselves, in our mean, abject, and sinful condition. Now, of all things in our condition, there is nothing so suited unto this end and purpose, as that which lies before us; namely, the vile remainders of enmity against God, which are yet in our hearts and natures. And it is no small evidence of a gracious soul, when it is willing to search itself in this matter, and to be helped

therein from a word of truth. When it is willing that the word should dive into the secret parts of the heart, and rip open whatever of evil and corruption lies therein. The prophet says of Ephraim, Hos. x. 11. 'He loved to tread out the corn;' he loved to work when he might eat, to have always the corn before him; but God, says he, 'would cause him to plough;' a labour no less needful, though at present not so delightful. Most men love to hear of the doctrine of grace, of the pardon of sin, of free love, and suppose they find food therein; however, it is evident that they grow and thrive in the life and notion of them. But to be breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts, to be inquiring after the weeds and briers that grow in them, they delight not so much, though this be no less necessary than the other. This path is not so beaten as that of grace, nor so trod in, though it be the only way to come to a true knowledge of grace itself. It may be some who are wise and grown in other truths, may yet be so little skilled in searching their own hearts, that they may be slow in the perception and understanding of these things: but this sloth and neglect is to be shaken off, if we have any regard unto our own souls. It is more than probable, that many a false hypocrite, who have deceived themselves as well as others, because they thought the doctrine of the gospel pleased them, and therefore supposed they believed it, might be delivered from their soul-ruining deceits, if they would diligently apply themselves unto this search of their own hearts. Or would other professors walk with so much boldness and security as some do, if they considered aright what a deadly watchful enemy they continually carry about with them, and in them? would they so much indulge as they do carnal joys and pleasures, or pursue their perishing affairs with so much delight and greediness as they do? it were to be wished, that we would all apply our hearts more to this work, even to come to a true understanding of the nature, power, and subtlety of this our adversary, that our souls may be humbled. And that,

1. In walking with God. His delight is with the humble and contrite ones, those that tremble at his word, the mourners in Sion; and such are we only, when we have a due sense of our own vile condition. This will beget reverence of God, sense of our distance from him, admiration

of his grace and condescension, a due valuation of mercy, far above those light, verbal, airy attainments, that some have boasted of.

2. In walking with others, it lays in provision to prevent those great evils of judging, spiritual unmercifulness, harsh censuring, which I have observed to have been pretended by many, who at the same time, as afterward hath appeared, have been guilty of greater or worse crimes than those which they have raved against in others. This, I say, will lead us to meekness, compassion, readiness to forgive, to pass by offences, even when we shall consider what is our state, as the apostle plainly declares, Gal. vi. 1. The man that understands the evil of his own heart, how vile it is, is the only useful, fruitful, and solidly believing and obedient person. Others are fit only to delude themselves, to disquiet families, churches, and all relations whatever. Let us then consider our hearts wisely, and then go and see if we can be proud of our gifts, our graces, our valuation and esteem amongst professors, our enjoyments. Let us go then and judge, condemn, reproach others that have been tempted; we shall find a great inconsistency in these things. And many things of the like nature might be here added upon the consideration of this woful effect of indwelling sin. The way of opposing and defeating its design herein shall be afterward considered.

CHAP. VII.

The captivating power of indwelling sin, wherein it consisteth. The prevalency of sin, when from itself, when from temptation. The rage and madness that is in sin.

The third thing assigned unto this law of sin in its opposition unto God, and the law of his grace, is, that it leads the soul captive, Rom. vii. 23. 'I find a law leading me captive' (captivating me) 'unto the law of sin.' And this is the utmost height which the apostle in that place carries the opposition and warring of the remainders of indwelling sin unto; closing the consideration of it with a complaint of the state and condition of believers thereby; and an earnest

prayer for deliverance from it, ver. 24. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death.' What is contained in this expression, and intended by it, shall be declared in the ensuing observations.

1. It is not directly the power and actings of the law of sin that are here expressed, but its success in and upon its actings. But success is the greatest evidence of power, and leading captive in war is the height of success. None can aim at greater success, than to lead their enemies captive. And it is a peculiar expression in the Scripture of great success. So the Lord Christ, on his victory over Satan, is said to 'lead captivity captive;' Ephes. iv. 8. That is, to conquer him who had conquered and prevailed upon others. And this he did when by death he 'destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;' Heb. ii. 14. Here then a great prevalency and power of sin, in its warring against the soul, is discovered. It so wars as to lead captive; which, had it not great power, it could not do; especially against that resistance of the soul which is included in this expression.

2. It is said, that it leads the soul captive 'unto the law of sin.' Not to this or that sin, particular sin, actual sin, but to the 'law of sin.' God, for the most part, ordereth things so, and gives out such supplies of grace unto believers, as that they shall not be made a prey unto this or that particular sin, that it should prevail in them, and compel them to serve it in the lusts thereof, that it should have dominion over them, that they should be captives and slaves unto it. This is that which David prays so earnestly against, Psalm xix. 12, 13. 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright.' He supposeth the continuance of the law of sin in him, ver. 12. which will bring forth errors of life, and secret sins, against which he findeth relief in pardoning and cleansing mercy which he prays for. This, saith he, will be my condition. But for sins of pride and boldness, such as all sins are that get dominion in a man, that make a captive of a man, the Lord restrain thy servant from them. For what sin soever gets such power in a man, be it in its own nature small or great, it becomes in him in whom it is a sin of boldness,

pride, and presumption. For these things are not reckoned from the nature or kind of the sin, but from its prevalency and customariness, wherein its pride, boldness, and contempt of God doth consist. To the same purpose, if I mistake not, prays Jabez, 1 Chron. iv. 10. 'O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand may be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.' The holy man took occasion from his own name to pray against sin, that that might not be a grief and sorrow to him by its power and prevalency. I confess sometimes it may come to this with a believer, that for a season he may be led captive by some particular sin. It may have so much prevalency in him, as to have power over him. So it seems to have been with David when he lay so long in his sin without repentance. And was plainly so with those in Isa. lvii. 17, 18. 'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him.' They continued under the power of their covetousness: so that no dealings of God with them, for so long a time could reclaim them. But for the most part, when any lust or sin doth so prevail, it is from the advantage and furtherance that it hath got by some powerful temptation of Satan. He hath poisoned it, inflamed it, and entangled the soul. So the apostle, speaking of such as through sin were fallen off from their holiness, says, 'they were in the snare of the devil, being taken captive by him at his will;' 2 Tim. ii. 26. Though it were their own lusts that they served, yet they were brought into bondage thereunto, by being entangled in some snare of Satan. And thence they are said to be taken alive, as a poor beast in a toil.

And here, by the way, we may a little inquire, whether the prevailing power of a particular sin in any, be from itself, or from the influence of temptation upon it, concerning which at present take only these two observations:

(1.) Much of the prevalency of sin upon the soul, is certainly from Satan, when the perplexing and captivating sin hath no peculiar footing, nor advantage in the nature, constitution, or condition of the sinner. When any lust grows high and prevailing more than others upon its own

account, it is from the peculiar advantage that it hath in the natural constitution, or the station or condition of the person in the world. For otherwise the law of sin gives an equal propensity unto all evil, an equal vigour unto every lust. When therefore it cannot be discerned, that the captivating sin is peculiarly fixed in the nature of the sinner, or is advantaged from his education or employment in the world, the prevalency of it is peculiarly from Satan. He hath got to the root of it, and hath given it poison and strength. Yea, perhaps sometimes that which may seem to the soul to be the corrupt lusting of the heart, is nothing but Satan's imposing his suggestions on the imagination. If, then, a man find an importunate rage from any corruption that is not evidently seated in his nature, let him, as the Papists say, cross himself, or fly by faith to the cross of Christ, for the devil is nigh at hand.

(2.) When a lust is prevalent unto captivity, where it brings in no advantage to the flesh, it is from Satan. All that the law of sin doth of itself, is to serve the providence of the flesh, Rom. xiii. 14. And it must bring in unto it somewhat of the profits and pleasures that are its object. Now, if the prevailing sin do not so act in itself, if it be more spiritual and inward, it is much from Satan by the imagination, more than the corruption of the heart itself. But this by the way.

I say, then, that the apostle treats not here of our being captivated unto this or that sin, but unto the law of sin. That is, we are compelled to bear its presence and burden whether we will or no. Sometimes the soul thinks or hopes that it may through grace be utterly freed from this troublesome inmate. Upon some sweet enjoyment of God, some full supply of grace, some return from wandering, some deep affliction, some thorough humiliation, the poor soul begins to hope that it shall now be freed from the law of sin. But after awhile it perceives that it is quite otherwise. Sin acts again, makes good its old station, and the soul finds that whether it will or no it must bear its yoke. This makes it sigh and cry out for deliverance.

3. This leading captive argues a prevalency against the renitency or contrary actings of the will. This is intimated plainly in this expression; namely, that the will op

poseth, and makes head, as it were, against the working of sin. This the apostle declares in those expressions which he uses, ver. 15. 19, 20. And herein consists the lusting of the Spirit against the flesh, Gal. v. 17. That is, the contending of grace to expel and subdue it. The spiritual habits of grace that are in the will, do so resist and act against it. And the excitation of those habits by the Spirit are directed to the same purpose. This leading captive, is contrary, I say, to the inclinations and actings of the renewed will. No man is made a captive but against his will. Captivity is misery and trouble, and no man willingly puts himself into trouble. Men choose it in its causes, and in the ways and means leading unto it, but not in itself. So the prophet informs us, Hos. v. 11. 'Ephraim was' not willingly 'oppressed and broken in judgment;' that was his misery and trouble; but he willingly walked after the commandment of the idolatrous kings which brought him thereunto. Whatever consent, then, the soul may give unto sin, which is the means of this captivity, it gives none to the captivity itself; that is against the will wholly. Hence these things ensue:

(1.) That the power of sin is great, which is that which we are in demonstration of; and this appears in its prevalency unto captivity, against the actings and contendings of the will for liberty from it. Had it no opposition made unto it, or were its adversary weak, negligent, slothful, it were no great evidence of its power that it made captives. But its prevailing against diligence, activity, watchfulness, the constant renitency of the will, this evinceth its efficacy.

(2.) This leading captive intimates manifold particular successes. Had it not success in particular it could not be said at all to lead captive. Rebel it might, assail it might, but it cannot be said to lead captive without some successes. And there are several degrees of the success of the law of sin in the soul. Sometimes it carries the person unto outward actual sin, which is its utmost aim; sometimes it obtaineth the consent of the will, but is cast out by grace, and proceeds no farther; sometimes it wearies and entangles the soul, that it turns aside, as it were, and leaves contending, which is a success also. One or more, or all of these must be, where captivity takes place. Such a kind of

course doth the apostle ascribe unto covetousness, 1 Tim. vi. 9.

(3.) This leading captive manifests this condition to be miserable and wretched. To be thus yoked and dealt withal against the judgment of the mind, the choice and consent of the will, its utmost strivings and contendings, how sad is it! When the neck is sore and tender with former pressures, to be compelled to bear the yoke again, this pierces, this grieves, this even breaks the heart. When the soul is principled by grace unto a loathing of sin, of every evil way, to a hatred of the least discrepancy between itself and the holy will of God, then to be imposed on by this law of sin, with all that enmity and folly, that deadness and filth, wherewith it is attended; what more dreadful condition? All captivity is dreadful in its own nature; the greatest aggravation of it is from the condition of the tyrant unto whom any one is captivated. Now what can be worse than this law of sin? Hence the apostle, having once mentioned this captivity, cries out as one quite weary and ready to faint, ver. 24.

(4.) This condition is peculiar to believers. Unregenerate men are not said to be led captive to the law of sin. They may indeed be led captive unto this or that particular sin or corruption, that is, they may be forced to serve it against the power of their convictions. They are convinced of the evil of it, an adulterer of his uncleanness, a drunkard of his abomination, and make some resolutions, it may be, against it. But their lust is too hard for them, they cannot cease to sin, and so are made captives or slaves to this or that particular sin. But they cannot be said to be 'led captive to the law of sin,' and that because they are willingly subject thereunto. It hath, as it were, a rightful dominion over them, and they oppose it not, but only when it hath irruptions to the disturbance of their consciences. And then the opposition they make unto it is not from their wills, but is the mere acting of an affrighted conscience, and a convinced mind. They regard not the nature of sin, but its guilt and consequences. But to be brought into captivity is that which befalls a man against his will. Which is all that shall be spoken unto this degree of the actings of the power of sin, manifesting itself in its success.

The fourth and last degree of the opposition made by the law of sin to God, and the law of his will and grace, is in its rage and madness. There is madness in its nature, Eccles. ix. 3. 'The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart.' The evil that the heart of man is full of by nature, is that indwelling sin whereof we speak. And this is so in their heart, that it riseth up unto madness. The Holy Ghost expresseth this rage of sin by a fit similitude, which he useth in sundry places; as, Jer. ii. 24. Hos. viii. 9. 'It maketh men as a wild ass; she traverseth her ways, and snuffeth up the wind, and runneth whither her mind or lust leads her.' And he saith of idolaters, enraged with their lusts, that they 'are mad upon their idols,' Jer. v. 38. We may a little consider what lies in this madness and rage of sin, and how it riseth up thereunto.

1. For the nature of it, it seems to consist in a violent, heady, pertinacious pressing unto evil or sin. Violence, importunity, and pertinacy are in it. It is the tearing and torturing of the soul by any sin to force its consent, and to obtain satisfaction. It riseth up in the heart, is denied by the law of grace, and rebuked; it returns and exerts its poison again; the soul is startled, casts it off; it returns again with new violence and importunity; the soul cries out for help and deliverance, looks round about to all springs of gospel grace and relief, trembles at the furious assaults of sin, and casts itself into the arms of Christ for deliverance. And if it be not able to take that course, it is foiled and hurried up and down through the mire and filth of foolish imaginations, corrupt and noisome lusts, which rend and tear it, as if they would devour its whole spiritual life and power. See 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. 2 Pet. ii. 14. It was not much otherwise with them whom we instanced in before, Isa. lvii. 17. They had an inflamed enraged lust working in them, even covetousness, or the love of this world; by which, as the apostle speaks, men 'pierce themselves through with many sorrows.' God is angry with them, and discovereth his wrath by all the ways and means that it was possible for them to be made sensible thereof. He was wroth and smote them; but though it may be this staggered them a little, yet they went on. He is angry and hides himself from them, deserts them as to his gracious, assist-

ing, comforting presence. Doth this work the effect? No, they go on frowardly still, as men mad on their covetousness. Nothing can put a stop to their raging lusts. This is plain madness and fury. We need not seek far for instances; we see men mad on their lusts every day: and, which is the worst kind of madness, their lusts do not rage so much in them, as they rage in the pursuit of them. Are those greedy pursuits of things in the world, which we see some men engaged in, though they have other pretences, indeed any thing else but plain madness in the pursuit of their lusts? God, who searcheth the hearts of men, knows, that the most of things that are done with other pretences in the world, are nothing but the actings of men, mad and furious in the pursuit of their lusts.

2. That sin ariseth not unto this height ordinarily, but when it hath got a double advantage.

(1.) That it be provoked, enraged, and heightened, by some great temptation. Though it be a poison in itself, yet being inbred in nature, it grows not violently outrageous without the contribution of some new poison of Satan unto it in a suitable temptation. It was the advantage that Satan got against David, by a suitable temptation, that raised his lusts to that rage and madness which it went forth unto in the business of Bathsheba and Uriah. Though sin be always a fire in the bones, yet it flames not, unless Satan come with his bellows to blow it up. And let any one in whom the law of sin ariseth to this height of rage, seriously consider, and he may find out where the devil stands and puts in in the business.

(2.) It must be advantaged by some former entertainment and prevalency. Sin grows not to this height at its first assault. Had it not been suffered to make its entrance, had there not been some yielding in the soul, this had not come about. The great wisdom and security of the soul in dealing with indwelling sin, is to put a violent stop unto its beginnings, its first motions and actings. Venture all on the first attempt. Die rather than yield one step unto it. If, through the deceit of sin, or the negligence of the soul, or its carnal confidence, to give bounds to lust's actings at other seasons, it makes any entrance into the soul, and finds any entertainment, it gets strength and power, and

insensibly ariseth to the frame under consideration. Thou hadst never had the experience of the fury of sin, if thou hadst not been content with some of its dalliances. Hadst thou not brought up this servant, this slave delicately, it would not have now presumed beyond a son. Now when the law of sin in any particular hath got this double advantage, the furtherance of a vigorous temptation, and some prevalency formerly obtained, whereby it is let into the strengths of the soul, it often riseth up to this frame whereof we speak.

3. We may see what accompanies this rage and madness, what are the properties of it, and what effects it produceth.

(1.) There is in it the casting off, for a time at least, of the yoke, rule, and government of the Spirit and law of grace. Where grace hath the dominion, it will never utterly be expelled from its throne, it will still keep its right and sovereignty; but its influences may for a season be intercepted, and its government be suspended by the power of sin. Can we think that the law of grace had any actual influence of rule on the heart of David, when upon the provocation received from Nabal, he was so hurried with the desire of self-revenge, that he cried, 'Gird on your swords,' to his companions, and resolved not to leave alive one man of his whole household; 1 Sam. xxv. 34. or that Asa was in any better frame, when he smote the prophet, and put him in prison, that spake unto him in the name of the Lord? Sin in this case is like an untamed horse, which having first cast off his rider, runs away with fierceness and rage. It first casts off a present sense of the yoke of Christ, and the law of his grace, and then hurries the soul at its pleasure. Let us a little consider how this is done.

The seat and residence of grace is in the whole soul; it is the inner man, it is in the mind, the will, and the affections; for the whole soul is renewed by it unto the image of God; Ephes. iv. 23, 24. and the whole man is a 'new creature;' 2 Cor. v. 17. And in all these doth it exert its power and efficacy; its rule or dominion is the pursuit of its effectual working in all the faculties of the soul, as they are one united principle of moral and spiritual operations. So then, the interrupting of its exercise, of its rule and power

by the law of sin, must consist in its contrary acting in and upon the faculties and affections of the soul, whereon, and by which, grace should exert its power and efficacy; and this it doth; it darkens the mind, partly through innumerable vain prejudices and false reasonings, as we shall see when we come to consider its deceitfulness, and partly through the steaming of the affections, heated with the noisome lusts that have laid hold on them. Hence that saving light that is in the mind is clouded and stifled, that it cannot put forth its transforming power to change the soul into the likeness of Christ discovered unto it, which is its proper work, Rom. xii. 2. The habitual inclination of the will to obedience, which is the next way of the working of the law of grace, is first weakened, then cast aside, and rendered useless by the continual solicitations of sin and temptation; so that the will first lets go its hold, and disputes whether it shall yield or no; and at last gives up itself to its adversary; and for the affections commonly the beginning of this evil is in them. They cross one another, and torture the soul with their impetuous violence. By this way is the rule of the law of grace intercepted by the law of sin, even by imposing upon it in the whole seat of its government. When this is done, it is sad work that sin will make in the soul. The apostle warns believers to take heed hereof, Rom. vi. 12. 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.' Look to it that it get not the dominion, that it usurp not rule, no not for a moment. It will labour to intrude itself unto the throne, watch against it, or a woful state and condition lies at the door. This then accompanies this rage and madness of the law of sin; it casts off during its prevalency the rule of the law of grace wholly; it speaks in the soul, but is not heard; it commands the contrary, but is not obeyed; it cries out, 'Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hateth,' but is not regarded; that is, not so far as to be able to put a present stop to the rage of sin, and to recover its own rule, which God in his own time restores to it by the power of his Spirit dwelling in us.

(2.) Madness or rage are accompanied with fearlessness and contempt of danger; it takes away the power of consideration, and all that influence that it ought to have

upon the soul. Hence sinners that are wholly under the power of this rage, are said, 'To run upon God, and the thick bosses of his buckler;' Job. xvi. 21. That wherein he is armed for their utter ruin. They despise the utmost that he can do to them, being secretly resolved to accomplish their lusts, though it cost them their souls. Some few considerations will farther clear this unto us.

[1.] Ofttimes, when the soul is broken loose from the power of renewing grace, God deals with it to keep it within bounds by preventing grace. So the Lord declares that he will deal with Israel, Hos, ii. 6. Seeing thou hast rejected me, I will take another course with thee; I will lay obstacles before thee that thou shalt not be able to pass on, whether the fury of thy lusts would drive thee. He will propose that to them from without, that shall obstruct them in their progress.

[2.] These hinderances that God lays in the way of sinners, as shall be afterward at large declared, are of two sorts.

1st. Rational considerations taken from the consequence of the sin and evil that the soul is solicited unto, and perplexed withal. Such are the fear of death, judgment, and hell, falling into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire. Whilst a man is under the power of the law of the Spirit of life, the 'love of Christ constraineth him;' 2 Cor. v. 14. The principle of his doing good and abstaining from evil, is faith working by love, accompanied with a following of Christ, because of the sweet savour of his name. But now, when this blessed easy yoke is for a season cast off, so as was manifested before, God sets a hedge of terror before the soul, minds it of death and judgment to come, flashes the flames of hell fire in the face, fills the soul with consideration of all the evil consequence of sin to deter it from its purpose. To this end doth he make use of all threatenings recorded in the law and gospel. To this head also may be referred all the considerations that may be taken from things temporal, as shame, reproach, scandal, punishments, and the like. By the consideration of these things, I say, doth God set a hedge before them.

2dly. Providential dispensations are used by the Lord to the same purpose, and these are of two sorts.

(1st.) Such as are suited to work upon the soul, and to cause it to desist and give over in its lustings and pursuit of sin. Such are afflictions and mercies, Isa. lvii. 17. 'I was wroth, and I smote them;' I testified my dislike of their ways by afflictions. So Hos. ii. 9. 11, 12. 'God chastens men with pains on their bodies,' saith he, in Job, 'to turn them from their purpose, and to hide sin from them;' Job xxxiii. 17. 19. And other ways he hath to come to them and touch them, as in their names, relations, estates, and desirable things; or else he heaps mercies on them, that they may consider who they are rebelling against. It may be signal distinguishing mercies are made their portion for many days.

(2dly.) Such as actually hinder the soul from pursuing sin, though it be resolved so to do. The various ways whereby God doth this, we must afterward consider.

These are the ways, I say, whereby the soul is dealt withal, after the law of indwelling sin hath cast off for a season the influencing power of the law of grace. But now, when lust rises up to rage or madness, it will also contemn all these, even the rod, and him that hath appointed it. It will rush on shame, reproaches, wrath, and whatever may befall it; that is, though they be presented unto it, it will venture upon them all. Rage and madness is fearless. And this it doth two ways.

[1st.] It possesseth the mind, that it suffers not the consideration of these things to dwell upon it, but renders the thoughts of them slight and evanid; or, if the mind do force itself to a contemplation of them, yet it interposeth between it and the affections, that they shall not be influenced by it in any proportion to what is required. The soul in such a condition will be able to take such things into contemplation, and not at all to be moved by them; and where they do prevail for a season, yet they are insensibly wrought off from the heart again.

[2dly.] By secret stubborn resolves to venture all upon the way wherein it is.

And this is the second branch of this evidence of the power of sin, taken from the opposition that it makes to the law of grace, as it were by the way of force, strength, and *violence; the* consideration of its deceit doth now follow.

CHAP. VIII.

Indwelling sin proved powerful from its deceit. Proved to be deceitful. The general nature of deceit. James i. 14. *opened. How the mind is drawn off from its duty by the deceitfulness of sin. The principal duties of the mind in our obedience. The ways and means whereby it is turned from it.*

THE second part of the evidence of the power of sin from its manner of operation, is taken from its deceitfulness. It adds in its working, deceit unto power. The efficacy of that must needs be great, and is carefully to be watched against, by all such as value their souls, where power and deceit are combined, especially advantaged and assisted by all the ways and means before insisted on.

Before we come to shew wherein the nature of this deceitfulness of sin doth consist, and how it prevaileth thereby, some testimonies shall be briefly given in unto the thing itself, and some light into the general nature of it.

That sin, indwelling sin, is deceitful, we have the express testimony of the Holy Ghost, as Heb. iii. 13. 'Take heed that ye be not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.' Deceitful it is, take heed of it, watch against it, or it will produce its utmost effect in hardening of the heart against God. It is on the account of sin, that the heart is said to be 'deceitful above all things;' Jer. xvii. 9. Take a man in other things, and as Job speaks, though he 'would be wise and crafty, he is like the wild ass's colt,' Job xi. 12. a poor, vain, empty nothing. But consider his heart on the account of this law of sin, it is crafty and deceitful above all things; 'They are wise to do evil,' saith the prophet, 'but to do good they know not;' Jer. iv. 22. To the same purpose speaks the apostle, Ephes. iv. 2. 'The old man is corrupt according to deceitful lusts.' Every lust, which is a branch of this law of sin, is deceitful; and where there is poison in every stream, the fountain must needs be corrupt. No particular lust hath any deceit in it, but what is communicated unto it from this fountain of all actual lust, this law of sin. And, 2 Thess. ii. 10. the coming of the man of sin, is said to be in and with the 'deceivableness of unrighteousness.' Unrighteousness is a thing generally decried and evil spoken of amongst men, so that it is not easy to conceive how any man *should prevail himself* of a reputation thereby. But

there is a deceivableness in it, whereby the minds of men are turned aside from a due consideration of it; as we shall manifest afterward. And thus the account which the apostle gives concerning those who are under the power of sin is, that they are 'deceived,' Titus iii. 3. And the life of evil men, is nothing but 'deceiving and being deceived;' 2 Tim. iii. 13. So that we have sufficient testimony given unto this qualification of the enemy with whom we have to deal; he is deceitful, which consideration of all things puts the mind of man to a loss in dealing with an adversary. He knows he can have no security against one that is deceitful, but in standing upon his own guard and defence all his days.

Farther to manifest the strength and advantage that sin hath by its deceit, we may observe that the Scripture places it for the most part as the head and spring of every sin, even as though there were no sin followed after, but where deceit went before. So 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14. The reason the apostle gives why Adam, though he was first formed, was not first in the transgression, is because he was not first deceived. The woman though made last, yet being first deceived, was first in the sin. Even that first sin began in deceit, and until the mind was deceived, the soul was safe. Eve therefore did truly express the matter, Gen. iii. 13. though she did it not to a good end, 'the serpent beguiled me,' saith she, 'and I did eat.' She thought to extenuate her own crime, by charging the serpent. And this was a new fruit of the sin she had cast herself into. But the matter of fact was true, she was beguiled before she ate; deceit went before the transgression. And the apostle shews that sin and Satan still take the same course, 2 Cor. xi. 3. There is, saith he, the same way of working towards actual sin, as was of old; beguiling, deceiving goes before; and sin, that is, the actual accomplishment of it, followeth after. Hence all the great works that the devil doth in the world, to stir men up to an opposition unto the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, he doth them by deceit; Rev. xii. 9. 'The devil, who deceiveth the whole world.' It were utterly impossible men should be prevailed on to abide in his service, acting his designs to their eternal, and sometimes their temporal ruin, were they not exceedingly deceived. See also chap. xx. 10.

Hence are those manifold cautions that are given us to

take heed, that we be not deceived, if we would take heed that we do not sin. See Ephes. v. 6. 1 Cor. vi. 9. xv. 33. Gal. vi. 7. Luke xxi. 8. From all which testimonies we may learn the influence that deceit hath into sin, and consequently the advantage that the law of sin hath to put forth its power by its deceitfulness. Where it prevails to deceive, it fails not to bring forth its fruit.

The ground of this efficacy of sin by deceit, is taken from the faculty of the soul affected with it. Deceit properly affects the mind; it is the mind that is deceived. When sin attempts any other way of entrance into the soul, as by the affections, the mind retaining its right and sovereignty, is able to give check and control unto it. But where the mind is tainted, the prevalency must be great. For the mind or understanding is the leading faculty of the soul, and what that fixes on, the will and affections rush after, being capable of no consideration but what that presents unto them. Hence it is, that though the entanglement of the affections unto sin be ofttimes most [illegible]some, yet the deceit of the mind is always most dan[illegible]; and that because of the place that it possesseth in the soul, as unto all its operations. Its office is to guide, direct, choose, and lead; and 'if the light that be in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!'

And this will farther appear, if we consider the nature of deceit in general. It consists in presenting unto the soul, or mind, things otherwise than they are, either in their nature, causes, effects, or present respect unto the soul. This is the general nature of deceit, and it prevails many ways. It hides what ought to be seen and considered, conceals circumstances and consequences, presents what is not, or things as they are not, as we shall afterward manifest in particular. It was shewed before, that Satan beguiled and deceived our first parents; that term the Holy Ghost gives unto his temptation and seduction. And how he did deceive them the Scripture relates, Gen. iii. 4, 5. He did it by representing things otherwise than they were. The fruit was desirable, that was apparent unto the eye. Hence Satan takes advantage secretly to insinuate, that it was merely an abridgment of their happiness, that God aimed at in forbidding them to eat of it. That it was for the trial of their

obedience, that certain, though not immediate ruin, would ensue upon the eating of it, he hides from them; only he proposeth the present advantage of knowledge, and so presents the whole case quite otherwise unto them, than indeed it was. This is the nature of deceit; it is a representation of a matter under disguise, hiding that which is undesirable, proposing that which indeed is not in it, that the mind may make a false judgment of it. So Jacob deceived Isaac by his brother's raiment, and the skins on his hands and neck.

Again, deceit hath advantage by that way of management which is inseparable from it. It is always carried on by degrees, by little and little, that the whole of the design and aim in hand be not at once discovered. So dealt Satan in that great deceit before-mentioned; he proceeds in it by steps and degrees. First, he takes off an objection, and tells them they shall not die; then proposeth the good of knowledge to them, and their being like to God thereby. To hide and conceal ends, to proceed by steps and degrees, to make use of what is obtained, and thence to press on to farther effects, is the true nature of deceit. Stephen tells us, that the king of Egypt 'dealt subtilly' or deceitfully 'with their kindred;' Acts vii. 19. How he did it we may see, Exod. i. he did not at first fall to killing and slaying of them, but says, ver. 10. 'Come let us deal wisely;' beginning to oppress them. This brings forth their bondage, ver. 11. Having got this ground to make them slaves, he proceeds to destroy their children, ver. 16. He fell not on them all at once, but by degrees. And this may suffice to shew in general, that sin is deceitful and the advantages that it hath thereby.

For the way, and manner, and progress of sin in working by deceit, we have it fully expressed, James i. 14, 15. 'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' This place declaring the whole of what we aim at in this matter, must be particularly insisted on.

In the foregoing verse, the apostle manifests that men are willing to drive the old trade, which our first parents at the entrance of sin set up withal, namely, of excusing themselves in their sins, and casting the occasion and blame *of them on others.* It is not, say they, from themselves,

their own nature and inclinations, their own designings, that they have committed such and such evils, but merely from their temptations; and if they know not where to fix the evil of those temptations, they will lay them on God himself, rather than go without an excuse or extenuation of their guilt. This evil in the hearts of men the apostle rebuketh, ver. 13. 'Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man.' And to shew the justness of this reproof in the words mentioned, he discovers the true causes of the rise and whole progress of sin, manifesting that the whole guilt of it lies upon the sinner, and that the whole punishment of it, if not graciously prevented, will be his lot also.

We have therefore, as was said, in these words the whole progress of lust or indwelling sin, by the way of subtlety, fraud, and deceit, expressed and limited by the Holy Ghost. And from hence we shall manifest the particular ways and means whereby it puts forth its power and efficacy in the hearts of men by deceitfulness and subtlety; and we may observe in the words,

First, The utmost end aimed at in all the actings of sin, or the tendency of it in its own nature, and that is death; 'sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;' the everlasting death of the sinner: pretend what it will, this is the end it aims at, and tends unto. Hiding of ends and designs is the principal property of deceit. This sin doth to the utmost; other things innumerable it pleads, but not once declares that it aims at the death, the everlasting death of the soul. And a fixed apprehension of this end of every sin, is a blessed means to prevent its prevalency in its way of deceit or beguiling.

Secondly, The general way of its acting towards that end is by temptation; 'Every man is tempted of his own lust.' I purpose not to speak in general of the nature of temptations, it belongs not unto our present purpose, and besides I have done it elsewhere. It may suffice at present to observe, that the life of temptation lies in deceit; so that in the business of sin, to be effectually tempted, and to be beguiled or deceived are the same. Thus it was in the first temptation; *it is every* where called the serpent's beguiling

or deceiving, as was manifested before: the serpent beguiled Eve; that is, prevailed by his temptations upon her. So that every man is tempted; that is, every man is beguiled or deceived by his own lust, or indwelling sin, which we have often declared to be the same.

The degrees whereby sin proceedeth in this work of tempting or deceiving, are five; for we shewed before, that this belongs unto the nature of deceit, that it works by degrees, making its advantage by one step to gain another.

The first of these consists in drawing off, or drawing away; 'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust.'

The second is in enticing; 'and is enticed.'

The third, in the conception of sin; 'when lust hath conceived,' when the heart is enticed, then lust conceives in it.

The fourth is the bringing forth of sin in its actual accomplishment; 'when lust hath conceived it brings forth sin.' In all which there is a secret allusion to an adulterous deviation from conjugal duties, and conceiving or bringing forth children of whoredom and fornication.

The fifth is, the finishing of sin, the completing of it, the filling up of the measure of it, whereby the end originally designed by lust is brought about; 'sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.' As lust conceiving, naturally and necessarily bringeth forth sin; so sin finished, infallibly procureth eternal death.

The first of these relates to the mind; that is, drawn off, or drawn away by the deceit of sin. The second unto the affections; they are enticed or entangled. The third to the will, wherein sin is conceived; the consent of the will being the formal conception of actual sin. The fourth to the conversation wherein sin is brought forth; it exerts itself in the lives and courses of men. The fifth respects an obdurate course in sinning, that finisheth, consummates, and shuts up the whole work of sin, whereon ensues death or eternal ruin.

I shall principally consider the three first, wherein the main strength of the deceit of sin doth lie, and that because in believers, whose state and condition is principally proposed to consideration, God is pleased, for the most part, graciously to prevent the fourth instance, or the bringing

forth of actual sins in their conversations; and the last always and wholly, or their being obdurate in a course of sin to the finishing of it. What ways God in his grace and faithfulness makes use of to stifle the conceptions of sin in the womb, and to hinder its actual production in the lives of men, must afterward be spoken unto. The first three instances then we shall insist upon fully, as those wherein the principal concernment of believers in this matter doth lie.

The first thing which sin is said to do, working in a way of deceit, is to draw away, or to draw off; whence a man is said to be drawn off, or drawn away and diverted, namely, from attending unto that course of obedience and holiness, which, in opposition unto sin and the law thereof, he is bound with diligence to attend unto.

Now it is the mind that this effect of the deceit of sin is wrought upon. The mind or understanding, as we have shewed, is the guiding, conducting faculty of the soul; it goes before in discerning, judging, and determining, to make the way of moral actions fair and smooth to the will and affections; it is to the soul what Moses told his father-in-law that he might be to the people in the wilderness, as 'eyes to guide them,' and keep them from wandering in that desolate place: it is the eye of the soul, without whose guidance the will and affections would perpetually wander in the wilderness of this world, according as any object, with an appearing present good, did offer or present itself unto them.

The first thing therefore that sin aims at in its deceitful working, is to draw off and divert the mind from the discharge of its duty.

There are two things which belong unto the duty of the mind, in that special office which it hath in and about the obedience which God requireth.

1. To keep itself and the whole soul in such a frame and posture, as may render it ready unto all duties of obedience, and watchful against all enticements unto the conception of sin.

2. In particular carefully to attend unto all particular actions, that they be performed as God requireth, for matter, manner, time, and season, agreeably unto his will, as also for the obviating all particular tenders of sin in things

forbidden. In these two things consists the whole duty of the mind of a believer; and from both of them doth indwelling sin endeavour to divert it, and draw it off.

1. The first of these is, the duty of the mind, in reference unto the general frame and course of the whole soul; and hereof two things may be considered. (1.) That it is founded in a due constant consideration; of ourselves, of sin, and its vileness: of God, of his grace, and goodness; and both these doth sin labour to draw it off from. (2.) In attending to those duties which are suited to obviate the working of the law of sin, in an especial manner.

(1.) It endeavours to draw it off from a due consideration, apprehension, and sensibleness of its own vileness, and the danger wherewith it is attended. This, in the first place, we shall instance in. A due, constant consideration of sin in its nature, in all its aggravating circumstances, in its end and tendency, especially as represented in the blood and cross of Christ, ought always to abide with us. Jer. ii. 19. 'Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.' Every sin is a forsaking of the Lord our God. If the heart know not, if it consider not, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, evil in itself, bitter in its effects, fruit, and event, it will never be secured against it. Besides, that frame of heart which is most accepted with God in any sinner, is the humble, contrite, self-abasing frame: Isa. lvii. 15. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the spirit of the contrite ones.' See also Luke xviii. 13, 14. This becomes a sinner, no garment sits so decently about him. 'Be clothed with humility,' saith the apostle, 1 Pet. v. 5. It is that which becomes us, and it is the only safe frame. He that walketh humbly walketh safely. This is the design of Peter's advice, 1 Epist. i. 17. 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' After that he himself had miscarried by another frame of mind, he gives this advice to all believers: it is not a bondage, servile fear, disquieting and perplexing the soul, but such a fear as may keep men constantly calling upon the Father, with reference unto the final judgment, that they may be preserved

from sin, whereof they were in so great danger, which he advises them unto. 'If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' This is the humble frame of soul; and how is this obtained? how is this preserved? No otherwise but by a constant deep apprehension of the evil, vileness, and danger of sin. So was it wrought, so was it kept up in the approved publican. 'God be merciful,' saith he, 'to me a sinner.' Sense of sin kept him humble, and humility made way for his access unto a testimony of the pardon of sin.

And this is the great preservative through grace from sin, as we have an example in the instance of Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9. Upon the urgency of his great temptation, he recoils immediately into this frame of spirit; 'How,' saith he, 'can I do this thing, and sin against God?' A constant, steady sense of the evil of sin gives him such preservation, that he ventures liberty and life in opposition to it. To fear sin is to fear the Lord; so the holy man tells us that they are the same, Job xxviii. 28. 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from iniquity that is understanding.'

This therefore in the first place, in general, doth the law of sin put forth its deceit about, namely, to draw the mind from this frame, which is the strongest fort of the soul's defence and security. It labours to divert the mind from a due apprehension of the vileness, abomination, and danger of sin. It secretly and insensibly insinuates lessening, excusing, extenuating thoughts of it; or it draws it off from pondering upon it, from being conversant about it in his thoughts so much as it ought, and formerly hath been. And if, after the heart of a man hath, through the word, Spirit, and grace of Christ, been made tender, soft, deeply sensible of sin, it becomes on any account, or by any means whatever, to have less, fewer, slighter, or less affecting thoughts of it or about it, the mind of that man is drawn away by the deceitfulness of sin.

There are two ways amongst others, whereby the law of sin endeavours deceitfully to draw off the mind from this duty, and frame ensuing thereon.

[1.] It doth it by a horrible abuse of gospel grace. There is in the gospel a remedy provided against the whole

evil of sin, the filth, the guilt of it, with all its dangerous consequents. It is the doctrine of the deliverance of the souls of men from sin and death. A discovery of the gracious will of God towards sinners by Jesus Christ. What now is the genuine tendency of this doctrine, of this discovery of grace, and what ought we to use it and improve it unto? This the apostle declares, Titus ii. 11, 12. 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.' This it teacheth, this we ought to learn of it and by it. Hence universal holiness is called a 'conversation that becometh the gospel,' Phil. i. 27. It becomes it as that which is answerable unto its end, aim, and design; as that which it requires, and which it ought to be improved unto. And accordingly it doth produce this effect where the word of it is received and preserved in a saving light, Rom. xii. 2. Ephes. iv. 20—24. But herein doth the deceit of sin interpose itself. It separates between the doctrine of grace, and the use and end of it. It stays upon its notions, and intercepts its influences in its proper application. From the doctrine of the assured pardon of sin, it insinuates a regardlessness of sin. God in Christ makes the proposition, and Satan and sin make the conclusion. For that the deceitfulness of sin is apt to plead unto a regardlessness of it from the grace of God whereby it is pardoned, the apostle declares in his reproof and detestation of such an insinuation, Rom. vi. 1. 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.' Men's deceitful hearts, saith he, are apt to make that conclusion; but far be it from us, that we should give any entertainment unto it. But yet that some have evidently improved that deceit unto their own eternal ruin, Jude declares, ver. 4. 'Ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.' And we have had dreadful instances of it in the days of temptation wherein we have lived.

Indeed, in opposition unto this deceit lies much of the wisdom of faith, and power of gospel grace. When the mind is fully possessed with, and cast habitually and firmly into, the mould of the notion and doctrine of gospel truth about the full and free forgiveness of all sins in the blood of Christ,

then to be able to keep the heart always in a deep humbling sense of sin, abhorrency of it, and self-abasement for it, is a great effect of gospel wisdom and grace. This is the trial and touchstone of gospel light. If it keep the heart sensible of sin, humble, lowly, and broken on that account; if it teach us to water a free pardon with tears, to detest forgiven sin, to watch diligently for the ruin of that, which we are yet assured shall never ruin us, it is divine, from above, of the Spirit of grace. If it secretly and insensibly make men loose and slight in their thoughts about sin, it is adulterate, selfish, false. If it will be all, answer all ends, it is nothing.

Hence it comes to pass, that sometimes we see men walking in a bondage-frame of spirit all their days, low in their light, mean in their apprehensions of grace, so that it is hard to discern whether covenant in their principles they belong unto; whether they are under the law, or under grace, yet walk with a more conscientious tenderness of sinning, than many who are advanced into higher degrees of light and knowledge than they. Not that the saving light of the gospel is not the only principle of saving holiness and obedience; but that through the deceitfulness of sin, it is variously abused to countenance the soul in manifold neglect of duties, and to draw off the mind from a due consideration of the nature, desert, and danger of sin. And this is done several ways.

(1st.) The soul having frequent need of relief by gospel grace against a sense of the guilt of sin and accusation of the law, comes at length to make it a common and ordinary thing, and such as may be slightly performed. Having found a good medicine for its wounds, and such as it hath had experience of its efficacy, it comes to apply it slightly, and rather skinneth over than cureth its sores. A little less earnestness, a little less diligence serves every time, until the soul, it may be, begins to secure itself of pardon in course. And this tends directly to draw off the mind from its constant and universal watchfulness against sin. He whose light hath made his way of access plain for the obtaining of pardon, if he be not very watchful, he is far more apt to become overly, formal, and careless in his work, than he who by reason of mists and darkness, beats about to find his way aright to the throne of grace. As a man that hath often travelled a road

passeth on without regard or inquiry; but he who is a stranger unto it, observing all turnings, and inquiring of all passengers, secures his journey beyond the other.

(2dly.) The deceitfulness of sin takes advantage from the doctrine of grace, by many ways and means to extend the bounds of the soul's liberty beyond what God hath assigned unto it. Some have never thought themselves free from a legal bondage frame, until they have been brought into the confines of sensuality, and some into the depths of it. How often will sin plead, this strictness, this exactness, this solicitude is no ways needful; relief is provided in the gospel against such things. Would you live as though there were no need of the gospel? as though pardon of sin were to no purpose? But concerning these pleas of sin from gospel grace, we shall have occasion to speak more hereafter in particular.

(3dly.) In times of temptation, this deceitfulness of sin will argue expressly for sin from gospel grace; at least it will plead for these two things:

[1st.] That there is not need of such a tenacious severe contending against it, as the principle of the new creature is fixed on. If it cannot divert the soul or mind wholly from attending unto temptations to oppose them, yet it will endeavour to draw them off as to the manner of their attendance. They need not use that diligence which at first the soul apprehends to be necessary.

[2dly.] It will be tendering relief as to the event of sin, that it shall not turn to the ruin or destruction of the soul, because it is, it will, or may be, pardoned by the grace of the gospel. And this is true, this is the great and only relief of the soul against sin, the guilt whereof it hath contracted already; the blessed and only remedy for a guilty soul. But when it is pleaded and remembered by the deceitfulness of sin in compliance with temptation unto sin, then it is poison; poison is mixed in every drop of this balsam, to the danger if not death of the soul. And this is the first way whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind from a due attendance unto that sense of its vileness, which alone is able to keep it in that humble, self-abased frame, that is acceptable with God. It makes the mind careless, as though its work were needless, because of the abounding

of grace; which is a soldier's neglect of his station trusting to a reserve, provided indeed only in case of keeping his own proper place.

[2.] Sin takes advantage to work by its deceit in this matter of drawing off the mind from a due sense of it, from the state and condition of men in the world. I shall give only one instance of its procedure in this kind. Men in their younger days have naturally their affections more quick, vigorous, and active, more sensibly working in them than afterward. They do as to their sensible working and operation naturally decay, and many things befall men in their lives, that take off the edge and keenness of them. But as men lose in their affections, if they are not besotted in sensuality, or by the corruptions that are in the world through lust, they grow and improve in their understandings, resolutions, and judgments. Hence it is, that if what had place formerly in their affections do not take place in their minds and judgments, they utterly lose them, they have no more place in their souls. Thus men have no regard for, yea, they utterly despise, those things which their affections were set upon with delight and greediness in their childhood. But if they are things that by any means come to be fixed in their minds and judgments, they continue a high esteem for them, and do cleave as close unto them, as they did when their affections were more vigorous; only, as it were, they have changed their seat in the soul. It is thus in things spiritual; the first and chiefest seat of the sensibleness of sin, is in the affections; as these in natural youth, are great and large, so are they spiritually in spiritual youth; Jer. ii. 2. 'I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.' Besides, such persons are newly come off from their convictions, wherein they have been cut to the heart, and so made tender. Whatever touches upon a wound is throughly felt. So doth the guilt of sin before the wound given by conviction be throughly cured. But now, when affections begin to decay naturally, they begin to decay also as to their sensible actings and motions in things spiritual. Although they improve in grace, yet they may decay in sense. At least spiritual sense is not radically in them, but only by way of communication. Now in these decays, if the soul take not care to fix a deep sense of sin on the mind

and judgment, thereby perpetually to affect the heart and affections, it will decay. And here the deceit of the law of sin interposeth itself. It suffers a sense of sin to decay in the affections, and diverts the mind from entertaining a due, constant, fixed consideration of it. We may consider this a little in persons that never make a progress in the ways of God beyond conviction. How sensible of sin will they be for a season? How will they then mourn and weep under a sense of the guilt of it? How will they cordially and heartily resolve against it? Affections are vigorous, and, as it were, bear rule in their souls. But they are like an herb that will flourish for a day or two with watering, although it have no root. For, awhile after, we see that these men the more experience they have had of sin, the less they are afraid of it, as the wise man intimates, Eccles. viii. 11. and at length they come to be the greatest contemners of sin in the world. No sinner like him that hath sinned away his convictions of sin. What is the reason of this? Sense of sin was in their convictions fixed on their affections; as it decayed in them, they took no care to have it deeply and graciously fixed on their minds. This the deceitfulness of sin deprived them of, and so ruined their souls. In some measure it is so with believers. If, as the sensibleness of the affections decay, if, as they grow heavy and obtuse, great wisdom and grace be not used to fix a due sense of sin upon the mind and judgment, which may provoke, excite, enliven, and stir up the affections every day, great decays will ensue. At first sorrow, trouble, grief, fear, affected the mind, and would give it no rest. If afterward the mind do not affect the heart with sorrow and grief, the whole will be cast out, and the soul be in danger of being hardened. And these are some of the ways whereby the deceit of sin diverts the mind from the first part of its safe preserving frame, or draws it off from its constant watchfulness against sin and all the effects of it.

The second part of this general duty of the mind, is to keep the soul unto a constant, holy consideration of God and his grace. This evidently lies at the spring head of gospel obedience. The way whereby sin draws off the mind from this part of its duty is open and known sufficiently, though not sufficiently watched against. Now this the Scripture every where declares to be the filling of the minds

of men with earthly things. This it placeth in direct opposition unto that heavenly frame of the mind, which is the spring of gospel obedience, Col. iii. 2. 'Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth;' or set your minds. As if he had said, on both together you cannot be set or fixed, so as principally and chiefly to mind them both And the affections to the one and the other, proceeding from these different principles of minding the one and the other, are opposed as directly inconsistent, 1 John ii. 15. 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' And actings in a course suitable unto these affections are proposed also as contrary; 'You cannot serve God and mammon.' These are two masters whom no man can serve at the same time to the satisfaction of both. Every inordinate minding, then, of earthly things, is opposed unto that frame wherein our minds ought to be fixed on God and his grace in a course of gospel obedience.

Several ways there are whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind in this particular, but the chief of them is by pressing these things on the mind under the notion of things lawful, and it may be necessary. So all those who excuse themselves in the parable from coming in to the marriage-feast of the gospel, did it on account of their being engaged in their lawful callings. One about his farm, another his oxen, the means whereby he ploughed in this world. By this plea were the minds of men drawn off from that frame of heavenliness which is required to our walking with God; and the rules of not loving the world, or using it as if we used it not, are hereby neglected. What wisdom, what watchfulness, what serious frequent trial and examination of ourselves is required, to keep our hearts and minds in a heavenly frame, in the use and pursuit of earthly things, is not my present business to declare. This is evident, that the engine whereby the deceit of sin draws off and turns aside the mind in this matter, is the pretence of the lawfulness of things about which it would have it exercise itself, against which very few are armed with sufficient diligence, wisdom, and skill. And this is the first and most general attempt that indwelling sin makes upon the soul by deceit: it draws away the mind from a diligent attention

unto its course in a due sense of the evil of sin, and a due and constant consideration of God and his grace.

CHAP. IX.

The deceit of sin in drawing off the mind from a due attendance unto especial duties of obedience, instanced in meditation and prayer.

How sin by its deceit endeavours to draw off the mind from attending unto that holy frame in walking with God, wherein the soul ought to be preserved, hath been declared. Proceed we now to shew how it doth the same work in reference unto those especial duties, by which the designs, workings, and prevalency of it may in an especial manner be obviated and prevented. Sin indeed maintains an enmity against all duties of obedience, or rather with God in them. 'When I would do good,' saith the apostle, 'evil is present with me.' Whenever I would do good, or what good soever I would do, that is spiritually good, good in reference unto God, it is present with me, to hinder me from it, to oppose me in it. And on the other side, all duties of obedience do lie directly against the actings of the law of sin. For as the flesh in all its actings lusteth against the Spirit, so the Spirit in all its actings lusteth against the flesh. And therefore every duty performed in the strength and grace of the Spirit, is contrary to the law of sin. Rom. viii. 13. 'If ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh.' Actings of the Spirit of grace in duties doth this work. These two are contrary. But yet there are some duties, which in their own nature, and by God's appointment, have a peculiar influence into the weakening and subduing the whole law of sin in its very principles and chiefest strengths. And these the mind of a believer ought principally in his whole course to attend unto. And these doth sin in its deceit endeavour principally to draw off the mind from. As in diseases of the body, some remedies, they say, have a specific quality against distempers; so, in this disease of the soul, there are some duties that have an especial virtue against this sinful distemper. I shall not insist on many of them, but instance only in two, which seem to me to be of this nature; namely,

that by God's designation they have a special tendency towards the ruin of the law of sin. And then we shall shew the ways, methods, and means, which the law of sin useth to divert the mind from a due attendance unto them. Now these duties are, first, prayer, especially private prayer: and, secondly, meditation. I put them together because they much agree in their general nature and end, differing only in the manner of their performance. For by meditation I intend meditating upon what respect and suitableness there is between the word and our own hearts, to this end, that they may be brought to a more exact conformity. It is our pondering on the truth as it is in Jesus, to find out the image and representation of it in our own hearts; and so it hath the same intent with prayer, which is to bring our souls into a frame in all things answering the mind and will of God. They are as the blood and spirits in the veins, that have the same life, motion, and use. But yet because persons are generally at a great loss in this duty of meditation, having declared it to be of so great efficacy, for the controlling of the actings of the law of sin, I shall in our passage give briefly two or three rules for the directing of believers to a right performance of this great duty, and they are these:

1. Meditate of God with God; that is, when we would undertake thoughts and meditations of God, his excellencies, his properties, his glory, his majesty, his love, his goodness, let it be done in a way of speaking unto God, in a deep humiliation and abasement of our souls before him. This will fix the mind, and draw it forth from one thing to another, to give glory unto God in a due manner, and affect the soul until it be brought into that holy admiration of God and delight in him, which is acceptable unto him. My meaning is, that it be done in a way of prayer and praise, speaking unto God.

2. Meditate on the word in the word; that is, in the reading of it, consider the sense in the particular passages we insist upon, looking to God for help, guidance, and direction, in the discovery of his mind and will therein, and then labour to have our hearts affected with it.

3. What we come short of in evenness and constancy in our thoughts in these things, let it be made up in

frequency. Some are discouraged because their minds do not regularly supply them with thoughts to carry on their meditations, through the weakness or imperfection of their inventions. Let this be supplied by frequent returns of the mind unto the subject proposed to be meditated upon, whereby new senses will still be supplied unto it. But this by the way.

These duties, I say, amongst others (for we have only chosen them for an instance, not excluding some others from the same place, office, and usefulness with them), do make an especial opposition to the very being and life of indwelling sin, or rather faith in them doth so. They are perpetually designing its utter ruin. I shall therefore upon this instance, in the pursuit of our present purpose, do these two things:

(1.) Shew the suitableness and usefulness of this duty, or these duties (as I shall handle them jointly), unto the ruining of sin.

(2.) Shew the means whereby the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from a due attendance unto them.

(1.) For the first observe,

[1.] That it is the proper work of the soul in this duty, to consider all the secret workings and actings of sin, what advantages it hath got, what temptations it is in conjunction withal, what harm it hath already done, and what it is yet farther ready to do. Hence David gives that title unto one of his prayers; Psal. cii. 'A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.' I speak of that prayer which is attended with a due consideration of all the wants, straits and emergencies of the soul. Without this, prayer is not prayer; that is, whatever shew or appearance of that duty it hath, it is no way useful, either to the glory of God, or the good of the souls of men. A cloud it is without water, driven by the wind of the breath of men. Nor was there ever any more present and effectual poison for souls found out, than the binding of them unto a constant form and usage of I know not what words in their prayers and supplications, which themselves do not understand. Bind men so in their trades, or in their businesses in this world, and they will quickly find the effect of it. By

this means are they disenabled from any due consideration of what at present is good for them, or evil unto them; without which, to what use can prayer serve, but to mock God, and delude men's own souls? But in this kind of prayer which we insist on, the Spirit of God falls in to give us his assistance, and that in this very matter of finding out and discovering the most secret actings and workings of the law of sin; Rom. viii. 26. 'We know not what to pray for as we ought, but he helps our infirmities:' he discovers our wants unto us, and wherein chiefly we stand in need of help and relief. And we find it by daily experience, that in prayer, believers are led into such discoveries and convictions of the secret deceitful work of sin in their hearts, as no considerations could ever have led them into. So David, Psal. li. designing the confession of his actual sin, having his wound in his prayer searched by the skilful hand of the Spirit of God, he had a discovery made unto him of the root of all his miscarriages in his original corruption, ver. 5. The Spirit in this duty is as the candle of the Lord unto the soul, enabling it to search all the inward parts of the belly. It gives a holy, spiritual light into the mind, enabling it to search the deep and dark recesses of the heart, to find out the subtle and deceitful machinations, figments, and imaginations of the law of sin therein. Whatever notion there be of it, whatever power and prevalency in it, it is laid hand on, apprehended, brought into the presence of God, judged, condemned, bewailed. And what can possibly be more effectual for its ruin and destruction? For together with its discovery, application is made unto all that relief which in Jesus Christ is provided against it, all ways and means whereby it may be ruined. Hence it is the duty of the mind, 'to watch unto prayer;' 1 Pet. iv. 7. To attend diligently unto the estate of our souls, and to deal fervently and effectually with God about it. The like also may be said of meditation, wisely managed unto its proper end.

[2.] In this duty there is wrought upon the heart a deep, full sense of the vileness of sin, with a constant renewed detestation of it, which, if any thing, undoubtedly tends to its ruin. This is one design of prayer, one end of the soul in it, namely, to draw forth sin, to set it in order, to present it unto itself in its vileness, abomination, and aggra-

vating circumstances, that it may be loathed, abhorred, and cast away as a filthy thing; as Isa. xxx. 22. He that pleads with God for sin's remission, pleads also with his own heart for its detestation, Hos. xiv. 3. Herein also sin is judged in the name of God; for the soul in its confession subscribes unto God's detestation of it, and the sentence of his law against it. There is indeed a course of these duties, which convinced persons do give up themselves unto, as a mere covert to their lusts: they cannot sin quietly, unless they perform duty constantly. But that prayer we speak of, is a thing of another nature, a thing that will allow no composition with sin, much less will serve the ends of the deceit of it, as the other formal prayer doth. It will not be bribed into a secret compliance with any of the enemies of God, or the soul, no not for a moment. And hence it is, that oftentimes in this duty, the heart is raised to the most sincere effectual sense of sin, and detestation of it, that the soul ever obtains in its whole course of obedience. And this evidently tends also to the weakening and ruin of the law of sin.

[3.] This is the way appointed and blessed of God to obtain strength and power against sin. James i. 5. 'Doth any man lack? let him ask of God.' Prayer is the way of obtaining from God by Christ a supply of all our wants, assistance against all opposition, especially that which is made against us by sin. This, I suppose, need not be insisted on; it is in the notion and practice clear to every believer. It is that wherein we call, and upon which the Lord Jesus comes in to our succour, with suitable help in a time of need, Heb. ii. 17.

[4.] Faith in prayer countermines all the workings of the deceit of sin; and that because the soul doth therein constantly engage itself unto God to oppose all sin whatsoever. Psal. cxix. 106. 'I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' This is the language of every gracious soul in its addresses unto God: the inmost parts thereof engage themselves to God to cleave to him in all things, and to oppose sin in all things. He that cannot do this, cannot pray. To pray with any other frame, is to flatter God with our lips, which he abhorreth. And this exceedingly helps a believer in pursuing sin unto its ruin. For,

1st. If there be any secret lust that lies lurking in the heart, he will find it either rising up against this engagement, or using its artifices to secure itself from it. And hereby it is discovered; and the conviction of the heart concerning its evil furthered and strengthened. Sin makes the most certain discovery of itself, and never more evidently than when it is most severely pursued. Lusts in men are compared to hurtful and noisome beasts, or men themselves are so because of their lusts, Isa. xi. 4, 5. Now such beasts use themselves to their dens and coverts, and never discover themselves, at least so much in their proper nature and rage, as when they are most earnestly pursued. And so it is with sin and corruption in the heart.

2ndly. If any sin be prevalent in the soul, it will weaken it; and take it off from the universality of this engagement unto God, it will breed a tergiversation unto it, a slightness in it. Now when this is observed, it will exceedingly awaken a gracious soul, and stir it up to look about it. As spontaneous lassitude, or a causeless weariness and indisposition of the body, is looked on as the sign of an approaching fever, or some dangerous distemper, which stirs up men to use a timely and vigorous prevention, that they be not seized upon by it; so is it in this case. When the soul of a believer finds in itself an indisposition to make fervent, sincere engagements of universal holiness unto God, it knows that there is some prevalent distemper in it, finds the place of it, and sets itself against it.

3dly. Whilst the soul can thus constantly engage itself unto God, it is certain that sin can rise unto no ruinous prevalency. Yea, it is a conquest over sin, a most considerable conquest, when the soul doth fully and clearly, without any secret reserve, come off with alacrity and resolution in such an engagement; as Psal. xviii. 23. And it may upon such a success triumph in the grace of God, and have good hope through faith, that it shall have a final conquest, and what it so resolves, shall be done; that it hath decreed a thing, and it shall be established. And this tends to the disappointment, yea, to the ruin of the law of sin.

4thly. If the heart be not deceived by cursed hypocrisy, this engagement unto God will greatly influence it unto a peculiar diligence and watchfulness against all sin.

There is no greater evidence of hypocrisy, than to have the heart like the whorish woman, Prov. vii. 14. to say, 'I have paid my vows, now I may take myself unto my sin;' or to be negligent about sin, as being satisfied that it hath prayed against it. It is otherwise in a gracious soul. Sense and conscience of engagements against sin made to God, do make it universally watchful against all its motions and operations. On these and sundry other accounts, doth faith in this duty exert itself peculiarly, to the weakening of the power, and stopping of the progress, of the law of sin.

If then the mind be diligent in its watch and charge, to preserve the soul from the efficacy of sin, it will carefully attend unto this duty, and the due performance of it, which is of such singular advantage unto its end and purpose. Here therefore,

(2.) Sin puts forth its deceit in its own defence; it labours to divert and draw off the mind from attending unto this and the like duties. And there are, among others, three engines, three ways and means, whereby it attempts the accomplishment of its design.

[1.] It makes advantage of its weariness unto the flesh. There is an aversation, as hath been declared, in the law of sin, unto all immediate communion with God. Now this duty is such. There is nothing accompanieth it whereby the carnal part of the soul may be gratified, or satisfied, as there may be somewhat of that nature in most public duties, in most that a man can do, beyond pure acts of faith and love. No relief or advantage then coming in by it, but what is purely spiritual, it becomes wearisome, burdensome to flesh and blood. It is like travelling alone without companion or diversion, which makes the way seem long, but brings the passenger with most speed to his journey's end. So our Saviour declares, when expecting his disciples according to their duty and present distress should have been engaged in this work, he found them fast asleep; Matt. xxvi. 41. 'The spirit,' saith he, 'indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;' and out of that weakness grew their indisposition unto, and weariness of, their duty. So God complains of his people, Isa. xliii. 22. 'Thou hast been weary of me.' And it may come at length unto that height which is mentioned, Mal. i. 13. 'Ye have said, Behold, what a weariness

is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts.' The Jews suppose that it was the language of men when they brought their offerings or sacrifices on their shoulders, which they pretended wearied them, and they panted and blowed as men ready to faint under them, when they brought only the torn, and the lame, and the sick. But so is this duty oftentimes to the flesh. And this the deceitfulness of sin makes use of, to draw the heart by insensible degrees from a constant attendance unto it. It puts in for the relief of the weak and weary flesh. There is a compliance between spiritual flesh, and natural flesh in this matter; they help one another, and an aversation unto this duty is the effect of their compliance. So it was in the spouse, Cant. v. 2, 3. She was asleep drowsing in her spiritual condition, and pleads her natural unfitness to rouse herself from that state. If the mind be not diligently watchful to prevent insinuations from hence, if it dwell not constantly on those considerations which evidence an attendance unto this duty to be indispensable, if it stir not up the principle of grace in the heart to retain its rule and sovereignty, and not to be dallied withal by foolish pretences, it will be drawn off, which is the effect aimed at.

[2.] The deceitfulness of sin makes use of corrupt reasonings taken from the pressing and urging occasions of life. Should we, says it in the heart, attend strictly unto all duties in this kind, we should neglect our principal occasions, and be useless unto ourselves and others in the world. And on this general account, particular businesses dispossess particular duties from their due place and time. Men have not leisure to glorify God and save their own souls. It is certain, that God gives us time enough for all that he requires of us in any kind in this world. No duties need to jostle one another, I mean constantly. Especial occasions must be determined according unto especial circumstances. But if in any thing we take more upon us than we have time well to perform it in without robbing God of that which is due to him, and our own souls, this God calls not unto, this he blesseth us not in. It is more tolerable that our duties of holiness and regard to God, should intrench upon the duties of our callings and employments in this world, than on the contrary; and yet neither

doth God require this at our hands in an ordinary manner or course. How little, then, will he bear with that which evidently is so much worse upon all accounts whatever. But yet, through the deceitfulness of sin, thus are the souls of men beguiled. By several degrees they are at length driven from their duty.

[3.] It deals with the mind to draw it off from its attendance unto this duty by a tender of a compensation to be made in and by other duties. As Saul thought to compensate his disobedience by sacrifice. May not the same duty performed in public, or in the family, suffice? And if the soul be so foolish as not to answer, those things ought to be done, and this not to be left undone, it may be ensnared and deceived. For, besides a command unto it, namely, that we should personally watch unto prayer, there is, as hath been declared, sundry advantages in this duty so performed against the deceit and efficacy of sin, which in the more public attendance unto it, it hath not. These sin strives to deprive the soul of by this commutation, which by its corrupt reasonings it tenders unto it.

[4.] I may add here that which hath place in all the workings of sin by deceit, namely, its feeding the soul with promises and purposes of a more diligent attendance unto this duty when occasions will permit. By this means it brings the soul to say unto its convictions of duty, as Felix did to Paul, 'Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.' And by this means oftentimes the present season and time, which alone is ours, is lost irrecoverably.

These are some of the ways and means whereby the deceit of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from its due attendance unto this duty, which is so peculiarly suited to prevent its progress and prevalency, and which aims so directly and immediately at its ruin. I might instance also in other duties of the like tendency. But this may suffice to discover the nature of this part of the deceit of sin. And this is the first way whereby it makes way for the farther entangling of the affections and the conception of sin. When sin hath wrought this effect on any one, he is said to be drawn away, to be diverted from what in his mind he ought constantly to attend unto, in his walking before the Lord.

And this will instruct us to see and discern where lies the beginning of our declensions and failings in the ways of God, and that either as to our general course, or as to our attendance unto especial duties. And this is of great importance and concernment unto us. When the beginnings and occasions of a sickness or distemper of body are known, it is a great advantage to direct in and unto the cure of it. God, to recall Sion to himself, shews her where was the beginning of her sin, Micah i. 13. Now this is that which for the most part is the beginning of sin unto us, even the drawing off the mind from a due attendance in all things unto the discharge of its duty. The principal care and charge of the soul lies on the mind; and if that fail of its duty, the whole is betrayed, either as unto its general frame, or as unto particular miscarriages. The failing of the mind is like the failing of the watchman in Ezekiel, the whole is lost by his neglect. This, therefore, in that self-scrutiny and search which we are called unto, we are most diligently to inquire after. God doth not look at what duties we perform, as to their number and tale, or as to their nature merely, but whether we do them with that intention of mind and spirit which he requireth. Many men perform duties in a road or course, and do not, as it were, so much as think of them. Their minds are filled with other things, only duty takes up so much of their time. This is but an endeavour to mock God, and deceive their own souls. Would you, therefore, take the true measure of yourselves, consider how it is with you as to the duty of your minds which we have inquired after. Consider whether, by any of the deceits mentioned, you have not been diverted and drawn away; and if there be any decays upon you in any kind, you will find that there hath been the beginning of them. By one way or other your minds have been made heedless, regardless, slothful, uncertain, being beguiled and drawn off from their duty. Consider the charge, Prov. iv. 23. 25—27. May not such a soul say, If I had attended more diligently, if I had considered more wisely, the vile nature of sin; if I had not suffered my mind to be possessed with vain hopes and foolish imaginations, by a cursed abuse of gospel grace; if I had not permitted it to be filled with the things of the world, and to become negligent in attending unto

especial duties, I had not at this day been thus sick, weak, thriftless, wounded, decayed, defiled. My careless, my deceived mind, hath been the beginning of sin and transgression unto my soul. And this discovery will direct the soul unto a suitable way for its healing and recovery, which will never be effected by a multiplying of particular duties, but by a restoring of the mind, Psal. xxiii. 3.

And this also doth hence appear to be the great means of preserving our souls, both as unto their general frame and particular duties, according to the mind and will of God; namely, to endeavour after a sound and steadfast mind. It is a signal grace to have the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. A stable, solid, resolved mind in the things of God, not easily moved, diverted, changed, not drawn aside, a mind not apt to hearken after corrupt reasonings, vain insinuations, or pretences to draw it off from its duty. This is that which the apostle exhorts believers unto, 1 Cor. xv. 38. 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' The steadfastness of our minds abiding in their duty, is the cause of all our unmoveableness and fruitfulness in obedience. And so Peter tells us, that those who are by any means led away, or enticed, 'they fall from their own steadfastness;' 2 Pet. iii. 7. And the great blame that is laid upon backsliders, is, that they are not steadfast, Psal. lxxviii. 37. 'Their spirit was not steadfast.' For if the soul be safe, unless the mind be drawn off from its duty, the soundness and steadfastness of the mind is its great preservative. And there are three parts of this steadfastness of the mind. First, A full purpose of cleaving to God in all things. Secondly, A daily renovation and quickening of the heart unto a discharge of this purpose. Thirdly, Resolutions against all dalliances or parlies about negligences in that discharge; which are not here to be spoken unto.

CHAP X.

The deceit of sin in drawing off the mind from its attendance unto particular duties farther discovered. Several things required in the mind of of believers, with respect unto particular duties of obedience. The actings of sin in a way of deceit, to divert the mind from them.

We have not as yet brought unto an issue the first way of the working of the deceit of sin; namely, in its drawing away of the mind from the discharge of its duty, which we insist upon the longer, upon a double account.

First, Because of its importance and concernment. If the mind be drawn off, if it be tainted, weakened, turned aside from a due and strict attendance unto its charge and office, the whole soul, will, and affections, are certainly entangled and drawn intosin, as hath been in part declared, and will afterward farther appear. This we ought therefore to give diligent heed unto, which is the design of the apostle's exhortation, Heb. ii. 1. 'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.' It is a failure of our minds, by the deceitfulness of sin, in losing the life, power, sense, and impression of the word which he cautions us against. And there is no way to prevent it, but by giving of most 'earnest heed unto the things which we have heard,' which expresseth the whole duty of our minds in attending unto obedience.

Secondly, Because the actings and workings of the mind being spiritual, are such as the conscience, unless clearly enlightened, and duly excited and stirred up, is not affected withal, so as to take due notice of them. Conscience is not apt to exercise reflex acts upon the mind's failures, as principally respecting the acts of the whole soul. When the affections are entangled with sin (of which afterward), or the will begins to conceive it by its express consent, conscience is apt to make an uproar in the soul, and to give it no rest or quiet until the soul be reclaimed, or itself be one way or other bribed or debauched. But these neglects of the mind being spiritual, without very diligent attendance, they are seldom taken notice of. Our minds are often in the Scriptures called our spirits; as Rom. i. 9. 'Whom I serve in my

spirit;' and are distinguished from the soul, which principally intends the affections in that distribution, 1 Thess. v. 23. 'Sanctify you wholly, your whole spirit and soul;' that is, your mind and affections. It is true, where the spirit is used to express spiritual gifts, it is as unto those gifts opposed to our understandings, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. which is there taken for the first act of the mind in a rational perception of things. But as that word is applied unto any faculty of our souls, it is the mind that it expresseth. This then being our spirit, the actings of it are secret and hidden, and not to be discovered without spiritual wisdom and diligence. Let us not suppose then that we dwell too long on this consideration, which is of so great importance to us, and yet so hidden, and which we are apt to be very insensible of; and yet our carefulness in this matter is one of the best evidences that we have of our sincerity. Let us not then be like a man that is sensible, and complains of a cut finger, but not of a decay of spirits tending unto death. There remains therefore as unto this head of our discourse, the consideration of the charge of the mind in reference unto particular duties and sins; and in the consideration of it we shall do these two things:

1. Shew what is required in the mind of a believer, in reference unto particular duties.

2. Declare the way of the working of the deceit of sin, to draw it off from its attendance thereunto. The like also shall be done with respect unto particular sins, and their avoidance.

(1.) For the right performance of any duty, it is not enough that the thing itself required be performed, but that it be universally squared and fitted unto the rule of it. Herein lies the great duty of the mind; namely, to attend unto the rule of duties, and to take care that all the concernments of them be ordered thereby. Our progress in obedience is our edification or building. Now it is but a very little furtherance unto a building, that a man bring wood and stones, and heap them up together without order: they must be hewed and squared, and fitted by line and rule, if we intend to build. Nor is it unto any advantage unto our edification in faith and obedience, that we multiply duties, if we heap them upon one another, if we order and dispose

them not according to rule: and therefore doth God expressly reject a multitude of duties, when not universally suited unto the rule, Isa. i. 11. 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?' and ver. 14. 'They are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.' And therefore all acceptable obedience is called a proceeding according unto rule, Gal. vi. 16. it is a canonical, or regular obedience. As letters in the alphabet heaped together signify nothing, unless they are disposed into their proper order, no more do our duties without this disposal. That they be so is the great duty of the mind, and which with all diligence it is to attend unto, Ephes. v. 15. 'Walk circumspectly,' exactly, accurately; that is, diligently in all things, take heed to the rule of what you do. We walk in duties, but we walk circumspectly in this attention of the mind.

(1.) There are some special things which the rule directs unto, that the mind is to attend in every duty; as,

[1.] That as to the matter of it, it be full and complete. Under the law, no beast was allowed to be a sacrifice that had any member wanting, any defect of parts. Such were rejected, as well as those that were lame or blind. Duties must be complete as to the parts, the matter of them. There may be such a part of the price kept back, as may make the tendering of all the residue unacceptable. Saul sparing Agag, and the fattest of the cattle, rendered the destroying of all the rest useless. Thus, when men will give alms, or perform other services, but not unto the proportion that the rule requireth, and which the mind by diligent attention unto it might discover, the whole duty is vitiated.

[2.] As to the principle of it, namely, that it be done in faith, and therein by an actual derivation of strength from Christ, John xv. 5. without whom we can do nothing. It is not enough that the person be a believer, though that be necessary unto every good work, Ephes. ii. 10. but also, that faith be peculiarly acted in every duty that we do; for our whole obedience is the obedience of faith, Rom. i. 5. that is, which the doctrine of faith requireth, and which the grace of faith beareth or bringeth forth. So Christ is expressly said to be 'our life,' Col. iii. 4. our spiritual life, that is, the spring, author, and cause of it. Now as in life natural, no vital act can be performed, but by the actual opera-

tion of the principle of life itself; so, in life spiritual, no spiritually-vital act, that is, no duty acceptable to God can be performed, but by the actual working of Christ, who is our life. And this is no other way derived unto us but by faith: whence saith the apostle, Gal. ii. 20. 'Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now lead in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God.' Not only was Christ his life, a living principle unto him, but he led a life, that is, discharged vital actions in all duties of holiness and obedience, by the faith of the Son of God, or in him, deriving supplies of grace and strength from him thereby. This therefore ought a believer diligently to attend unto, namely, that every thing he doth to God be done in the strength of Christ; which wherein it consisteth ought diligently to be inquired into by all who intend to walk with God.

[3.] In this respect unto rule, the manner of the performance of every duty is to be regarded. Now there are two things in the manner of the performance of any duty which a believer, who is trusted with spiritual light, ought to attend unto.

1st. That it be done in the way, and by the means that God hath prescribed with respect unto the outward manner of its performance. And this is especially to be regarded in duties of the worship of God; the matter and outward manner whereof do both equally fall under his command. If this be not regarded, the whole duty is vitiated. I speak not of them who suffer themselves to be deluded by the deceitfulness of sin, utterly to disregard the rule of the word in such things, and to worship God according to their own imaginations; but of them principally, who although they in general profess to do nothing but what God requires, and as he requires it, yet do not diligently attend to the rule, to make the authority of God to be the sole cause and reason both of what they do, and of the manner of the performance of it. And this is the reason that God so often calls on his people to consider diligently and wisely, that they may do all according as he had commanded.

2 dly. The affections of the heart and mind in duties belong to the performance of them in the inward manner. The prescriptions and commands of God for attendance hereunto are innumerable, and the want hereof renders

every duty an abomination unto him. A sacrifice without a heart, without salt, without fire, of what value is it? No more are duties without spiritual affections. And herein is the mind to keep the charge of God; to see that the heart which he requires be tendered to him. And we find also that God requireth especial affections to accompany special duties. 'He that giveth with cheerfulness;' which if they are not attended unto, the whole is lost.

[4.] The mind is to attend unto the ends of duties; and therein principally the glory of God in Christ. Several other ends will sin and self impose upon our duties: especially two it will press hard upon us with: first, satisfaction of our convictions and consciences; secondly, the praise of men. For self-righteousness and ostentation, are the main ends of men that are fallen off from God in all moral duties whatsoever. In their sins they endeavour for to satisfy their lusts; in their duties, their conviction and pride. These the mind of a believer is diligently to watch against, and to keep up in all a single eye to the glory of God, as that which answers the great and general rule of all our obedience; 'Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.' These and the like things, I say, which are commonly spoken unto, is the mind of a believer obliged to attend diligently and constantly unto, with respect unto all the particular duties of our walking before God. Here then lies no small part of the deceit of sin; namely, to draw the mind off from this watch, to bring an inadvertency upon it, that it shall not in these things keep the watch and charge of the Lord. And if it can do so, and thereby strip our duties of all their excellencies which lie in these concernments of them, that the mind is to attend unto, it will not much trouble itself nor us about the duties themselves. And this it attempts several ways.

1st. By persuading the mind to content itself with generals, and to take it off from attending unto things in particular instances. For example; it would persuade the soul to rest satisfied in a general aim of doing things to the glory of God, without considering how every particular duty may have that tendency. Thus Saul thought that he had fulfilled his own duty, and done the will of God, and sought his glory in his war against Amalek, when for want of at-

tendance to every particular duty in that service, he had dishonoured God, and ruined himself and his posterity. And men may persuade themselves, that they have a general design for the glory of God, when they have no active principle in particular duties tending at all that way. But if, instead of fixing the mind by faith on the peculiar advancing the glory of God in a duty, the soul content itself with a general notion of doing so, the mind is already diverted and drawn off from its charge by the deceitfulness of sin. If a man be travelling in a journey, it is not only required of him, that he bend his course that way, and so go on; but if he attend not unto every turning, and other occurrences in his way, he may wander and never come to his journey's end. And if we suppose that in general we aim at the glory of God, as we all profess to do, yet if we attend not unto it distinctly upon every duty that occurs in our way, we shall never attain the end aimed at. And he who satisfies himself with this general purpose, without acting it in every special duty, will not long retain that purpose neither. It doth the same work upon the mind in reference unto the principle of our duties, as it doth unto the end. Their principle is, that they be done in faith, in the strength of Christ; but if men content themselves that they are believers, that they have faith, and do not labour in every particular duty to act faith, to lead their spiritual lives in all the acts of them by the faith of the Son of God, the mind is drawn off from its duty. It is particular actions wherein we express and exercise our faith and obedience; and what we are in them, that we are, and no more.

2dly. It draws off the mind from the duties beforementioned, by insinuating a secret contentment unto it from the duty itself performed, as to the matter of it. This is a fair discharge of a natural conscience. If the duty be performed, though as to the manner of its performance it come short almost in all things of the rule, conscience and conviction will be satisfied. As Saul, upon his expedition against Amalek, cries to Samuel, 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, I have done the commandment of the Lord.' He satisfied himself, though he had not attended as he ought to the whole will of God in that matter. And thus was it with them, Isa. lviii. 3. 'Wherefore have we fasted, say

they, and thou regardest it not?' they had pleased themselves in the performance of their duties, and expected that God also should be pleased with them. But he shews them at large wherein they had failed, and that so far as to render what they had done an abomination. And the like charge he expresseth against them, chap. xlviii. 1, 2. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw the mind unto, namely, to take up in the performance of the duty itself. Pray thou oughtest, and thou hast prayed; give alms thou oughtest, and thou hast given alms; quiet then thyself in what thou hast done, and go on to do the like. If it prevail herein, the mind is discharged from farther attendance and watching unto duty, which leaves the soul on the borders of many evils. For,

3dly. Hence customariness in all duties will quickly ensue, which is the height of sins drawing off the mind from duty. For men's minds may be drawn from all duties, in the midst of the most abundant performance of them. For in and under them, the mind may be subject unto an habitual diversion from its charge and watch unto the rule. What is done with such a frame, is not done to God, Amos v. 25. None of their sacrifices were to God, although they professed that they were all so. But they attended not unto his worship in faith, and unto his glory, and he despised all their duties. See also Hos. x. 1. And this is the great reason why professors thrive so little under the performance of a multitude of duties. They attend not unto them in a due manner, their minds being drawn off from their circumspect watch, and so they have little or no communion with God in them, which is the end whereunto they are designed, and by which alone they become useful and profitable unto themselves. And in this manner are many duties of worship and obedience performed by a woful generation of hypocrites, formalists, and profane persons, without either life or light in themselves, or acceptation with God; their minds being wholly estranged from a due attendance unto what they do, by the power and deceitfulness of sin.

2. As it is in respect of duties, so also it is in respect of sins. There are sundry things in and about every sin that the mind of a believer, by virtue of its office and duty, is obliged to attend diligently unto, for the pre-

servation of the soul from it. Things they are which God hath appointed and sanctified, to give effectual rebukes and checks to the whole working of the law of sin, and such as in the law of grace, under which we are, are exceedingly suited and fitted unto that purpose. And these the deceit of sin endeavours by all means to draw off the mind from a due consideration of, and attendance unto. Some few of them we shall a little reflect upon.

(1.) The first and most general is the sovereignty of God, the great lawgiver, by whom it is forbidden. This Joseph fixed on in his great temptation, Gen. xxxix. 9. 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' There was in it a great evil, a great ingratitude against man, which he pleads also and insists upon, ver. 8, 9. but that which fixed his heart and resolution against it, was the formality of it, that it was sin against God, by whom it was severely forbidden. So the apostle informs us, that in our dealing in any thing that is against the law, our respect is still to be unto the lawgiver and his sovereignty: James iv. 11, 12. 'If thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge; there is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy.' Consider this always, there is one lawgiver, holy, righteous, armed with sovereign power and authority; he is able to save and destroy. Hence sin is called a rebellion, a casting off his yoke, a despising of him, and that in his sovereignty, as the great lawgiver; and this ought the mind always practically to attend unto, in all the lustings, actings, and suggestions of the law of sin, especially when advantaged by any suitable or vigorous temptation. It is God that hath forbidden this thing, the great lawgiver, under whose absolute sovereignty I am, in dependance on whom I live, and by whom I am to be disposed of, as to my present and eternal condition. This Eve fixed on at the beginning of her temptation; 'God hath said, we must not eat of this tree,' Gen. iii. 3. but she kept not her ground, she abode not by that consideration, but suffered her mind to be diverted from it by the subtlety of Satan, which was the entrance of her transgression; and so it is unto us all in our deviations from obedience.

(2.) The deceit of sin, of every sin, the punishment appointed unto it in the law, is another thing that the

mind ought actually to attend unto, in reference unto every particular evil. And the diversions from this, that the minds of men have been doctrinally and practically attended withal, have been an inlet into all manner of abominations. Job professeth another frame in himself, chap. xxxi. 23. 'Destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.' Many evils he had mentioned in the foregoing verses, and pleads his innocency from them, although they were such as upon the account of his greatness and power, he could have committed easily without fear of danger from men. Here he gives the reason that prevailed with him so carefully to abstain from them, 'Destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.' I considered, saith he, that God had appointed death and destruction for the punishment of sin, and that such was his greatness, highness, and power, that he could inflict it unto the uttermost, in such a way as no creature is able to abide or to avoid. So the apostle directs believers always to consider what a 'fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. x. 31. and that because he hath said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will recompense;' ver. 30. He is a sin-avenging God, that will by no means acquit the guilty; as in the declaration of his gracious name, infinitely full of encouragements to poor sinners in Christ, he adds that in the close, that 'he will by no means clear the guilty;' Exod. xxxiv. 7. That he may keep upon the minds of them whom he pardoneth, a due sense of the punishment that is due from his vindictive justice unto every sin. And so the apostle would have us mind, that even 'our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29, that is, that we should consider his holiness and vindictive justice, appointing unto sin a meet recompense of reward. And men's breaking through this consideration, he reckons as the height of the aggravation of their sins, Rom. i. 32. 'They knew that it is the judgment of God, that they which commit such things were worthy of death, yet continued to do them.' What hope is there for such persons? There is indeed relief against this consideration for humbled believing souls in the blood of Christ; but this relief is not to take off the mind from it, as it is appointed of God to be a restraint

from sin. And both these considerations, even the sovereignty of God, and the punishment of sin, are put together by our Saviour, Matt. x. 28. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'

(3.) The consideration of all the love and kindness of God, against whom every sin is committed, is another thing that the mind ought diligently to attend unto. And this is a prevailing consideration, if rightly and graciously managed in the soul. This Moses presseth on the people, Deut. xxxii. 6. 'Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?' Is this a requital for eternal love, and all the fruits of it? for the love and care of a father, of a redeemer, that we have been made partakers of? And it is the same consideration which the apostle manageth to this purpose, 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' The receiving of the promises ought to be effectual, as to stir us up unto all holiness, so to work and effect an abstinence from all sin. And what promises are these? namely, that God 'will be a father unto us, and receive us,' chap. vi. 17, 18. which compriseth the whole of all the love of God towards us here, and to eternity. If there be any spiritual ingenuity in the soul, whilst the mind is attentive to this consideration, there can be no prevailing attempt made upon it by the power of sin. Now there are two parts of this consideration.

[1.] That which is general in it, that which is common unto all believers. This is managed unto this purpose, 1 John iii. 1—3. 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.' Consider, saith he, the love of God, and the privileges that we enjoy by it: 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we

should be called the sons of God.' Adoption is an especial fruit of it, and how great a privilege is this? Such love it is, and such are the fruits of it, that the world knoweth nothing of the blessed condition which we obtain and enjoy thereby: 'The world knoweth us not.' Nay, it is such love, and so unspeakably blessed and glorious are the effects of it, that we ourselves are not able to comprehend them. What use then ought we to make of this contemplation of the excellent unspeakable love of God? Why, saith he, 'Every one that hath this hope purifieth himself.' Every man who being made partaker of this love, and thereupon a hope of the full enjoyment of the fruits of it, of being made like to God in glory, purifieth himself, that is, in an abstinence from all and every sin, as in the following words is at large declared.

[2.] It is to be considered as to such peculiar mercies and fruits of love, as every one's soul hath been made partaker of. There is no believer, but besides the love and mercy which he hath in common with all his brethren, he hath also in the lot of his inheritance, some enclosures, some especial mercies wherein he hath a single propriety. He hath some joy which no stranger intermeddleth withal, Prov. xiv. 10. Particular applications of covenant love and mercy to his soul. Now these are all provisions laid in by God, that they may be borne in mind against an hour of temptation, that the consideration of them may preserve the soul from the attempts of sin. Their neglect is a high aggravation of our provocations. 1 Kings xi. 9. it is charged as the great evil of Solomon, that he had sinned against special mercies, especial intimations of love; he sinned after God had appeared to him twice. God required that he should have borne in mind that especial favour, and have made it an argument against sin. But he neglected it, and is burdened with this sore rebuke. And indeed all especial mercies, all especial tokens and pledges of love, are utterly lost and misspent upon us, if they are not improved unto this end. This then is another thing, that it is the duty of the mind greatly to attend unto, and to oppose effectually unto every attempt that is made on the soul by the law of sin.

(4.) The considerations that arise from the blood and

mediation of Christ, are of the same importance. So the apostle declares, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' There is a constraining efficacy in this consideration; it is great, forcible, effectual, if duly attended unto. But I must not here in particular insist upon these things. Nor,

(5.) Shall I speak of the inhabitation of the Spirit, the greatest privilege that we are made partakers of in this world. The due consideration how he is grieved by sin, how his dwelling-place is defiled thereby, how his comforts are forfeited, lost, despised by it, might also be insisted on. But the instances passed through are sufficient unto our purpose. Now herein lies the duty of the mind, in reference unto particular sins and temptations. It is diligently and carefully to attend unto these things, to dwell constantly upon the consideration of them, to have them in a continual readiness to oppose unto all the lustings, actings, warrings, attempts, and rage of sin.

In reference hereunto doth sin in an especial manner put forth and act its deceit. It labours by all means to draw off the mind from its due attendance unto these things; to deprive the soul of this great preservative and antidote against its poison. It endeavours to cause the soul to satisfy itself with general undigested notions about sin, that it may have nothing in particular to betake itself unto in its own defence, against its attempts and temptations. And the ways whereby it doth this may be also briefly considered.

[1.] It is from the deceit of sin that the mind is spiritually slothful, whereby it becomes negligent unto this duty. The principal discharge of its trust in this matter is expressed by watching, which is the great caution that the Lord Jesus gave unto his disciples in reference unto all their dangers from sin and Satan, Mark xiii. 37. 'I say unto all, Watch.' That is, use your utmost diligence and circumspection, that you be not surprised and entangled with temptations. It is called also consideration: 'Consider your ways;' 'consider your latter end;' the want whereof God complains of in his people, Deut. xxxii. 29. Now that

which is contrary to these indispensable conditions of our preservation, is spiritual slothfulness, as the apostle declares, Heb. vi. 11, 12. 'And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful.' If we shew not diligence, we are slothful, and in danger of coming short to inherit the promises. See 2 Pet. i. 5—11. 'And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,' &c. 'For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things you shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' All this the mind is turned from, if once by the deceit of sin it be made slothful. Now this sloth consists in three things.

1st. Inadvertency; it doth not set itself to consider and attend unto its special concernments. The apostle persuading the Hebrews with all earnestness to attend diligently, to consider carefully, that they may not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, gives this reason of their danger, that they were 'dull of hearing,' chap. v. 11. that is, that they were slothful, and did not attend unto the things of their duty. A secret regardlessness is apt to creep upon the soul, and it doth not set itself to a diligent marking how things go with it, and what is continually incumbent on it.

2dly. An unwillingness to be stirred up unto its duty. Prov. xix. 24. 'The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.' There is an unwillingness in sloth to take any notice of warnings, calls, excitations, or stirrings up by the word, Spirit, judgments, any thing that God maketh use of, to call the mind unto a due consideration of the condition of the soul. And this is a perfect evidence that the mind is made slothful by the deceit of sin, when especial calls and warnings, whether in a suitable word, or a pressing judgment, cannot

prevail with it to pull its hand out of its bosom, that is, to set about the special duties that it is called unto.

3dly. Weak and ineffectual attempts to recover itself unto its duty. Prov. xxvi. 14. 'As the door turneth itself upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed.' In the turning of a door upon its hinges, there is some motion but no progress. It removes up and down, but is still in the place and posture that it was. So is it with the spiritually slothful man on his bed, or in his security. He makes some motions or faint endeavours towards a discharge of his duty, but goes not on. There where he was one day, there he is the next; yea, there where he was one year, he is the next. His endeavours are faint, cold, and evanid; he gets no ground by them, but is always beginning and never finishing his work.

4thly, Heartlessness upon the apprehensions of difficulties and discouragements. Prov. xxii. 13. 'The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets.' Every difficulty deters him from duty. He thinks it impossible for him to attain to that accuracy, exactness, and perfection which he is in this matter to press after; and therefore contents himself in his old coldness, negligence, rather than to run the hazard of a universal circumspection. Now if the deceit of sin hath once drawn away the mind into this frame, it lays it open to every temptation and incursion of sin. The spouse in the Canticles seems to have been overtaken with this distemper, chap. v. 1—3. And this puts her on various excuses why she cannot attend unto the call of Christ, and apply herself unto her duty in walking with him.

[2.] It draws away the mind from its watch and duty in reference unto sin by surprisals. It falls in conjunction with some urging temptation, and surpriseth the mind into thoughts quite of another nature, than those which it ought to insist upon in its own defence. So it seems to have been with Peter; his carnal fear closing with the temptation wherein Satan sought to winnow him, filled his mind with so many thoughts about his own imminent danger, that he could not take into consideration the love and warning of Christ; nor the evil whereunto his temptation led him, nor

any thing that he ought to have insisted on for his preservation. And therefore, upon a review of his folly in neglecting those thoughts of God, and the love of Christ, which through the assistance of the Holy Ghost might have kept him from his scandalous fall, he wept bitterly. And this is the common way of the working of the deceit of sin, as unto particular evils. It lays hold on the mind suddenly, with thoughtfulness about the present sin, possesseth it, takes it up, so that either it recovers not itself at all to the considerations mentioned, or if any thoughts of them be suggested, the mind is so prepossessed and filled, that they take no impression on the soul, or make no abode in it. Thus doubtless was David surprised in the entrance of his great sin. Sin and temptation did so possess and fill his mind with the present object of his lust, that he utterly forgot, as it were, those considerations which he had formerly made use of, when he so diligently kept himself from his iniquity. Here therefore lies the great wisdom of the soul, in rejecting the very first motions of sin, because by parlies with them the mind may be drawn off from attending unto its preservatives, and so the whole rush into evil.

[3.] It draws away the mind by frequency and long continuance of its solicitations, making as it were at last a conquest of it. And this happens not without an open neglect of the soul, in want of stirring up itself to give an effectual rebuke in the strength and by the grace of Christ unto sin, which would have prevented its prevalency. But of this, more shall be spoken afterward. And this is the first way whereby the law of sin acts its deceit against the soul. It draws off the mind from attendance unto its charge and office; both in respect of duty and sin. And so far as this is done, the person is said to be drawn away, or drawn off. He is tempted, every man is tempted, when he is thus drawn away by his own lust, or the deceit of sin dwelling in him. And the whole effect of this working of the deceitfulness of sin may be reduced unto these three heads.

1st. The remission of a universally watchful frame of spirit unto every duty, and against all, even the most hidden and secret actings of sin.

2dly. The omission of peculiar attending unto such duties as have an especial respect unto the weakening and

ruin of the whole law of sin, and the obviating of its deceitfulness.

3dly. Spiritual sloth, as to a diligent regard unto all the especial concernments of duties and sins. When these three things, with their branches mentioned, less or more, are brought about, in or upon the soul, or so far as they are so, so far a man is drawn off by his own lust, or the deceit of sin.

There is no need of adding here any directions for the prevention of this evil, they having sufficiently been laid down in our passage through the consideration both of the duty of the mind, and of the deceit of sin.

CHAP. XI.

The working of sin by deceit to entangle the affections. The ways whereby it is done. Means of their prevention.

THE second thing in the words of the apostle ascribed unto the deceitful working of sin is its enticing. A man is drawn away and enticed. And this seems particularly to respect the affections, as drawing away doth the mind. The mind is drawn away from duty, and the affections are enticed unto sin. From the prevalency hereof a man is said to be enticed, or entangled as with a bait; so the word imports. For there is an allusion in it unto the bait wherewith a fish is taken on the hook which holds him to his destruction. And concerning this effect of the deceit of sin, we shall briefly shew two things:

1. What it is to be enticed, or to be entangled with the bait of sin, to have the affections tainted with an inclination thereunto, and when they are so.

2. What course sin takes, and what way it proceedeth in, thus to entice, ensnare, or entangle the soul.

For the first,

(1.) The affections are certainly entangled when they stir up frequent imaginations about the proposed object which this deceit of sin leadeth and enticeth towards. When sin prevails, and the affections are gone fully after it, it fills the imagination with it, possessing it with images, likenesses, appearances of it continually. Such persons

'devise iniquity and work evil on their beds,' which they also practise when they are able, when it is in the power of their hand, Micah ii. 1. As in particular, Peter tells us that 'they have eyes full of an adulteress, and they cannot cease from sin;' 2 Pet. ii. 14. that is, their imaginations are possessed with a continual representation of the object of their lusts. And it is so in part where the affections are in part entangled with sin, and begin to turn aside unto it. John tells us that the things that are in the world, are the 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' 1 Epist. ii. 16. The lust of the eyes is that which by them is conveyed unto the soul. Now it is not the bodily sense of seeing, but the fixing of the imagination from that sense on such things that is intended. And this is called the eyes, because thereby things are constantly represented unto the mind and soul, as outward objects are unto the inward sense by the eyes. And oftentimes the outward sight of the eyes is the occasion of these imaginations. So Achan declares how sin prevailed with him, Josh. vii. 21. First he saw the wedge of gold, and Babylonish garment, and then he coveted them. He rolled them, the pleasures, the profit of them, in his imagination, and then fixed his heart upon the obtaining of them. Now the heart may have a settled, fixed detestation of sin; but yet if a man find that the imagination of the mind is frequently solicited by it, and exercised about it, such a one may know that his affections are secretly enticed and entangled.

(2.) This entanglement is heightened when the imagination can prevail with the mind to lodge vain thoughts in it, with secret delight and complacency. This is termed by casuists, 'cogitatio morosa cum delectatione,' an abiding thought, with delight, which towards forbidden objects is in all cases actually sinful. And yet this may be, when the consent of the will unto sin is not obtained; when the soul would not for the world do the thing, which yet thoughts begin to lodge in the mind about. This lodging of vain thoughts in the heart the prophet complains of, as a thing greatly sinful, and to be abhorred, Jer. iv. 14. All these thoughts are messengers that carry sin to and fro between the imagination and the affections, and still increase it, inflaming the imagination, and more and more entangling the affections. Achan

thinks upon the golden wedge, this makes him like it and love it; by loving of it his thoughts are infected, and return to the imagination of its worth, and goodly shew, and so by little and little the soul is inflamed unto sin. And here if the will parts with its sovereignty, sin is actually conceived.

(3.) Inclinations, or readiness to attend unto extenuations of sin, or the reliefs that are tendered against sin when committed, manifest the affections to be entangled with it. We have shewed, and shall yet farther evidence, that it is a great part of the deceit of sin, to tender lessening and extenuating thoughts of sin unto the mind. Is it not a little one? or, there is mercy provided; or, it shall be in due time relinquished and given over, is its language in a deceived heart. Now when there is a readiness in the soul to hearken and give entertainment unto such secret insinuations arising from this deceit, in reference unto any sin, or unapprovable course, it is an evidence that the affections are enticed. When the soul is willing, as it were, to be tempted, to be courted by sin, to hearken to its dalliances and solicitations, it hath lost of its conjugal affections unto Christ, and is entangled. This is 'looking on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright;' Prov. xxiii. 31. A pleasing contemplation on the invitations of sin, whose end the wise man gives us, ver. 32. When the deceit of sin hath prevailed thus far on any person, then he is enticed or entangled; the will is not yet come to the actual conception of this or that sin by its consent, but the whole soul is in a near inclination thereunto. And many other instances I could give, as tokens and evidences of this entanglement: these may suffice to manifest what we intend thereby.

2. Our next inquiry is, How, or by what means, the deceit of sin proceeds thus to entice and entangle the affections? and two or three of its baits are manifest herein.

(1.) It makes use of its former prevalency upon the mind, in drawing it off from its watch and circumspection. Says the wise man, Prov. i. 17. 'Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird;' or before the eyes of every thing that hath a wing, as in the original. If it hath eyes open to discern the snare, and a wing to carry it away, it will not be caught. And in vain should the deceit of sin

spread its snares and nets for the entanglement of the soul, whilst the eyes of the mind are intent upon what it doth, and so stir up the wings of its will and affections to carry it away and avoid it. But if the eyes be put out or diverted, the wings are of very little use for escape; and therefore, this is one of the ways which is used by them who take birds or fowls in their nets; they have false lights, or shews of things, to divert the sight of their prey; and when that is done, they take the season to cast their nets upon them. So doth the deceit of sin; it first draws off and diverts the mind by false reasonings and pretences, as hath been shewed, and then casts its net upon the affections for their entanglement.

(2.) Taking advantage of such seasons, it proposeth sin as desirable, as exceeding satisfactory to the corrupt part of our affections; it gilds over the object by a thousand pretences, which it presents unto corrupt lustings. This is the laying of a bait, which the apostle in this verse evidently alludes unto. A bait is somewhat desirable and suitable, that is proposed to the hungry creature for its satisfaction, and it is by all artifices rendered desirable and suitable. Thus is sin presented by the help of the imagination unto the soul; that is, sinful and inordinate objects, which the affections cleave unto, are so presented. The apostle tells us, that there are 'pleasures of sin;' Heb. xi. 35. which, unless they are despised, as they were by Moses, there is no escaping of sin itself. Hence they that live in sin are said to 'live in pleasure;' James v. 5. Now this pleasure of sin consisteth in its suitableness to give satisfaction to the flesh, to lust, to corrupt affections. Hence is that caution, Rom. xiii. 14. 'Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof.' That is, do not suffer your minds, thoughts, or affections, to fix upon sinful objects, suited to give satisfaction to the lusts of the flesh, to nourish and cherish them thereby. To which puspose he speaks again, Gal. v. 16. 'Fulfil ye not the lusts of the flesh.' Bring not in the pleasures of sin to give them satisfaction. When men are under the power of sin, they are said to 'fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind;' Ephes. ii. 3. Thus therefore the deceit of sin endeavours to entangle the affections, by proposing unto them, through the assistance of the imagination, that

suitableness which is in it to the satisfaction of its corrupt lusts, now set at some liberty by the inadvertency of the mind. It presents its 'wine sparkling in the cup,' the beauty of the adulteress, the riches of the world unto sensual and covetous persons, and somewhat in the like kind, in some degrees to believers themselves. When therefore, I say, sin would entangle the soul, it prevails with the imagination to solicit the heart, by representing this false-painted beauty, or pretended satisfactoriness of sin: and then if Satan with any peculiar temptation fall into its assistance, it oftentimes inflames all the affections, and puts the whole soul into disorder.

(3.) It hides the danger that attends sin, it covers it as the hook is covered with the bait, or the net spread over with meat for the fowl to be taken. It is not indeed possible that sin should utterly deprive the soul of the knowledge of the danger of it. It cannot dispossess it of its notion or persuasion that 'the wages of sin is death,' and that it is the 'judgment of God, that they that commit sin are worthy of death.' But this it will do; it will so take up and possess the mind and affections with the baits and desirableness of sin, that it shall divert them from an actual and practical contemplation of the danger of it. What Satan did in and by his first temptation, that sin doth ever since. At first Eve guards herself with calling to mind the danger of sin; if we eat, or touch it, we shall die, Gen. iii. 3. But so soon as Satan had filled her mind with the beauty and usefulness of the fruit to make one wise, how quickly did she lay aside her practical prevalent consideration of the danger of eating it, the curse due unto it; or else relieves herself with a vain hope and pretence that it should not be, because the serpent told her so. So was David beguiled in his great transgression by the deceit of sin; his lust being pleased and satisfied, the consideration of the guilt and danger of his transgression was taken away; and therefore he is said to have 'despised the Lord,' 2 Sam. xii. 9. in that he considered not the evil that was in his heart, and the danger that attended it in the threatening or commination of the law. Now sin, when it presseth upon the soul to this purpose, will use a thousand wiles to hide from it the terror of the Lord, the end of transgressions, and especially of that pe-

culiar folly which it solicits the mind unto. Hopes of pardon shall be used to hide it, and future repentance shall hide it, and present importunity of lust shall hide it, occasions and opportunities shall hide it, surprisals shall hide it, extenuation of sin shall hide it, balancing of duties against it shall hide it, fixing the imagination on present objects shall hide it, desperate resolutions to venture the uttermost for the enjoyment of lust in its pleasures and profits shall hide it. A thousand wiles it hath, which cannot be recounted.

(4.) Having prevailed thus far, gilding over the pleasures of sin, hiding its end and demerit, it proceeds to raise perverse reasonings in the mind, to fix it upon the sin proposed, that it may be conceived and brought forth, the affections being already prevailed upon, of which we shall speak under the next head of its progress.

Here we may stay a little, as formerly, to give some few directions for the obviating of this woful work of the deceitfulness of sin. Would we not be enticed or entangled, would we not be disposed to the conception of sin, would we be turned out of the road and way which goes down to death? Let us take heed of our affections, which are of so great concernment in the whole course of our obedience, that they are commonly in the Scripture called by the name of the heart, as the principal thing which God requires in our walking before him. And this is not slightly to be attended unto. Prov. iv. 23. saith the wise man, 'Keep thy heart with diligence,' or, as in the original, 'above' or 'before all keepings;' Before every watch, keep thy heart. You have many keepings that you watch unto; you watch to keep your lives, to keep your estates, to keep your reputations, to keep up your families; but, saith he, above all these keepings, prefer that, attend to that of the heart, of your affections, that they be not entangled with sin; there is no safety without it. Save all other things and lose the heart, and all is lost, lost unto all eternity. You will say then, What shall we do, or how shall we observe this duty?

[1.] Keep your affections as to their object.

1st. In general. This advice the apostle gives in this very case, Col. iii. His advice in the beginning of that chapter is to direct us unto the mortification of sin, which he expressly

engageth in, ver. 5. 'Mortify therefore your members which are on the earth.' Prevent the working and deceit of sin which wars in your members. To prepare us, to enable us hereunto, he gives us that great direction, ver. 2. 'Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth.' Fix your affections upon heavenly things; this will enable you to mortify sin; fill them with the things that are above, let them be exercised with them, and so enjoy the chiefest place in them. They are above, blessed and suitable objects, meet for, and answering unto, our affections. God himself, in his beauty and glory; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is 'altogether lovely, the chiefest of ten thousand;' grace and glory; the mysteries revealed in the gospel; the blessedness promised thereby. Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things, as it is our duty that they should be, it is our happiness when they are, what access could sin with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its envenomed baits, have unto our souls? how should we loath all its proposals, and say unto them, Get ye hence as an abominable thing? For what are the vain transitory pleasures of sin, in comparison of the exceeding recompense of reward which is proposed unto us? Which argument the apostle presses, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

2dly. As to the object of your affections in an especial manner; let it be the cross of Christ, which hath exceeding efficacy towards the disappointment of the whole work of indwelling sin. Gal. vi. 14. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' The cross of Christ he gloried and rejoiced in; this his heart was set upon, and these were the effects of it; it crucified the world unto him, made it a dead and undesirable thing. The baits and pleasures of sin are taken all of them out of the world, and the things that are in the world, namely, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' These are the things that are in the world; from these doth sin take all its baits, whereby it enticeth and entangleth our souls. If the heart be filled with the cross of Christ, it casts death and undesirableness upon them all, it leaves no seeming beauty, no appearing pleasure or comeliness in them. Again, saith he, It crucifieth me to the

world; makes my heart, my affections, my desires dead unto any of these things. It roots up corrupt lusts and affections, leaves no principle to go forth and make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Labour, therefore, to fill your hearts with the cross of Christ. Consider the sorrows he underwent, the curse he bore, the blood he shed, the cries he put forth, the love that was in all this to your souls, and the mystery of the grace of God therein. Meditate on the vileness, the demerit, and punishment of sin, as represented in the cross, the blood, the death of Christ. Is Christ crucified for sin, and shall not our hearts be crucified with him unto sin? shall we give entertainment unto that, or hearken unto its dalliances, which wounded, which pierced, which slew our dear Lord Jesus? God forbid. Fill your affections with the cross of Christ, that there may be no room for sin. The world once put him out of the house into a stable, when he came to save us; let him now turn the world out of doors, when he is come to sanctify us.

[2.] Look to the vigour of the affections towards heavenly things; if they are not constantly attended, excited, directed, and warned, they are apt to decay, and sin lies in wait to take every advantage against them. Many complaints we have in the Scripture of those who lost their first love, in suffering their affections to decay. And this should make us jealous over our own hearts, lest we also should be overtaken with the like backsliding frame. Wherefore be jealous over them, often strictly examine them and call them to account, supply unto them due considerations for their exciting and stirring up unto duty.

CHAP. XII.

The conception of sin through its deceit. Wherein it consisteth. The consent of the will unto sin. The nature thereof. Ways and means whereby it is obtained. Other advantages made use of by the deceit of sin. Ignorance. Errors.

THE third success of the deceit of sin in its progressive work, is the conception of actual sin. When it hath drawn the mind off from its duty, and entangled the affections, it proceeds to conceive sin in order to the bringing of it forth.

'Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.' Now the conception of sin, in order unto its perpetration, can be nothing but the consent of the will; for as without the consent of the will sin cannot be committed, so where the will hath consented unto it, there is nothing in the soul to hinder its actual accomplishment. God doth indeed, by various ways and means, frustrate the bringing forth of these adulterate conceptions, causing them to melt away in the womb, or one way or other prove abortive, so that not the least part of that sin is committed which is willed or conceived; yet there is nothing in the soul itself that remains to give check unto it, when once the will hath given its consent. Ofttimes when a cloud is full of rain, and ready to fall, a wind comes and drives it away. And when the will is ready to bring forth its sin, God diverts it by one wind or other; but yet the cloud was as full of rain as if it had fallen, and the soul as full of sin as if it had been committed.

This conceiving of lust or sin then, is its prevalency in obtaining the consent of the will unto its solicitations. And hereby the soul is deflowered of its chastity towards God in Christ, as the apostle intimates, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. To clear up this matter we must observe,

1. That the will is the principle, the next seat and cause of obedience and disobedience. Moral actions are unto us, or in us, so far good or evil as they partake of the consent of the will. He spake truth of old who said, 'Omne peccatum est adeo voluntarium, ut non sit peccatum nisi sit voluntarium;' 'Every sin is so voluntary, that if it be not voluntary it is not sin.' It is most true of actual sins. The formality of their iniquity ariseth from the acts of the will in them, and concerning them. I mean, as to the persons that commit them; otherwise in itself the formal reason of sin is its aberration from the law of God.

2. There is a twofold consent of the will unto sin.

(1.) That which is full, absolute, complete, and upon deliberation. A prevailing consent, the convictions of the mind being conquered, and no principle of grace in the will to weaken it. With this consent the soul goes into sin as a ship before the wind with all its sails displayed, without any check or stop. It rusheth into sin like the horse into the battle. Men thereby, as the apostle speaks, 'giving them-

selves over to sin with greediness;' Ephes. iv. 19. Thus Ahab's will was in the murdering of Naboth; he did it upon deliberation, by contrivance, with a full consent; the doing of it gave him such satisfaction as that it cured his malady, or the distemper of his mind. This is that consent of the will which is acted in the finishing and completing of sin, in unregenerate persons, and is not required to the single bringing forth of sin, whereof we speak.

(2.) There is a consent of the will, which is attended with a secret renitency and volition of the contrary. Thus Peter's will was in the denying of his master. His will was in it, or he had not done it; it was a voluntary action, that which he chose to do at that season. Sin had not been brought forth if it had not been thus conceived. But yet, at this very time, there was resident in his will a contrary principle of love to Christ, yea, and faith in him which utterly failed not. The efficacy of it was intercepted, and its operations suspended actually, through the violent urging of the temptation that he was under; but yet it was in his will, and weakened his consent unto sin, though it consented. It was not done with self-pleasing, which such full acts of the will do produce.

3. Although there may be a predominant consent in the will, which may suffice for the conception of particular sins; yet there cannot be an absolute, total, full consent of the will of a believer unto any sin. For,

(1.) There is in his will a principle fixed on good, on all good. Rom. vii. 21. 'He would do good.' The principle of grace in the will, inclines him to all good. And this in general is prevalent against the principle of sin, so that the will is denominated from thence. Grace hath the rule and dominion, and not sin, in the will of every believer. Now that consent unto sin in the will, which is contrary to the inclination and generally prevailing principle in the same will, is not, cannot be, total, absolute, and complete.

(2.) There is not only a general, ruling, prevailing principle in the will against sin, but there is also a secret reluctancy in it against its own act in consenting unto sin. It is true, the soul is not sensible sometimes of this reluctancy, because the present consent carries away the prevailing act of the will, and takes away the sense of the lusting

of the spirit, or reluctancy of the principle of grace in the will. But the general rule holdeth in all things at all times, Gal. v. 17. 'The Spirit lusteth against the flesh:' it doth so actually, though not always to the same degree, nor with the same success. And the prevalency of the contrary principle in this or that particular act, doth not disprove it. It is so on the other side. There is no acting of grace in the will but sin lusts against it; although that lusting be not made sensible in the soul, because of the prevalency of the contrary acting of grace; yet it is enough to keep those actings from perfection in their kind. So is it in this renitency of grace against the acting of sin in the soul; though it be not sensible in its operations, yet it is enough to keep that act from being full and complete. And much of spiritual wisdom lies in discerning aright between the spiritual renitency of the principle of grace in the will against sin, and the rebukes that are given the soul by conscience upon conviction for sin.

4. Observe, that reiterated repeated acts of the consent of the will unto sin, may beget a disposition and inclinableness in it unto the like acts, that may bring the will unto a proneness and readiness to consent unto sin upon easy solicitations, which is a condition of soul dangerous, and greatly to be watched against.

5. This consent of the will which we have thus described, may be considered two ways.

(1.) As it is exercised about the circumstances, causes, means and inducements unto sin.

(2.) As it respects this or that actual sin.

In the first sense, there is a virtual consent of the will unto sin in every inadvertency unto the prevention of it, in every neglect of duty that makes way for it, in every hearkening unto any temptation leading towards it. In a word, in all the diversions of the mind from its duty, and entanglements of the affections by sin before-mentioned. For where there is no act of the will formally, or virtually, there is no sin. But this is not that which we now speak of; but in particular the consent of the will unto this or that actual sin, so far as that either sin is committed, or is prevented by other ways and means not of our present consideration. And herein consists the conceiving of sin.

These things being supposed, that which in the next place we are to consider, is the way that the deceit of sin proceedeth in; to procure the consent of the will, and so to conceive actual sin in the soul. To this purpose observe,

[1.] That the will is a rational appetite; rational as guided by the mind; and an appetite as excited by the affections; and so in its operation or actings hath respect to both, is influenced by both.

[2.] It chooseth nothing, consents to nothing, but 'sub ratione boni,' as it hath an appearance of good, some present good. It cannot consent to any thing under the notion or apprehension of its being evil in any kind. Good is its natural and necessary object, and therefore whatever is proposed unto it for its consent, must be proposed under an appearance of being either good in itself, or good at present unto the soul, or good so circumstantiate as it is; so that,

[3.] We may see hence the reason why the conception of sin is here placed as a consequent of the mind's being drawn away, and the affections being entangled. Both these have an influence into the consent of the will, and the conception of this or that actual sin thereby. Our way therefore here is made somewhat plain. We have seen at large how the mind is drawn away by the deceit of sin, and how the affections are entangled; that which remains is but the proper effect of these things. For the discovery whereof we must instance in some of the special deceits, corrupt and fallacious reasonings before-mentioned, and then shew their prevalency on the will to a consent unto sin.

1st. The will is imposed upon by that corrupt reasoning, that grace is exalted in a pardon; and that mercy is provided for sinners. This first, as hath been shewed, deceives the mind, and that opens the way to the will's consent, by removing a sight of evil which the will hath an aversation unto. And this in carnal hearts prevails so far as to make them think that their liberty consists in being servants of corruption, 2 Pet. ii. 19. And the poison of it doth oftentimes taint and vitiate the minds of believers themselves; whence we are so cautioned against it in the Scripture. To what therefore hath been spoken before, unto

the use and abuse of the doctrine of the grace of the gospel, we shall add some few other considerations, and fix upon one place of Scripture that will give light unto it. There is a twofold mystery of grace; of walking with God, and of coming unto God. And the great design of sin is to change the doctrine and mystery of grace in reference unto these things, and that by applying those considerations unto the one, which are proper unto the other, whereby each part is hindered, and the influence of the doctrine of grace into them for their furtherance defeated. See 1 John ii. 1, 2. 'These things write I unto you that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.' Here is the whole design and use of the gospel briefly expressed. 'These things,' saith he, 'I write unto you.' What things were these? Those mentioned, ver. 2. 'The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us:' that is, the things concerning the person and mediation of Christ: and, ver. 7. that pardon, forgiveness, and expiation from sin is to be attained by the blood of Christ. But to what end and purpose doth he write these things to them, what do they teach, what do they tend unto? A universal abstinence from sin; 'I write unto you,' saith he, 'that you sin not.' This is the proper, only, genuine end of the doctrine of the gospel. But to abstain from all sin, is not our condition in this world: chap. i. 8. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' What then shall be done in this case? In supposition of sin, that we have sinned, is there no relief provided for our souls and consciences in the gospel? Yes, saith he, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is a propitiation for our sins.' There is full relief in the propitiation and intercession of Christ for us. This is the order and method of the doctrine of the gospel, and of the application of it to our own souls: first, to keep us from sin; and then to relieve us against sin. But here entereth the deceit of sin, and puts this 'new wine into old bottles,' whereby the bottles are broken, and the wine perisheth as to our benefit by it. It changeth

this method and order of the application of gospel truths. It takes up the last first, and that excludes the use of the first utterly. If any man sin, there is pardon provided, is all the gospel that sin would willingly suffer to abide on the minds of men. When we would come to God by believing, it would be pressing the former part of being free from sin; when the gospel proposeth the latter principally, or the pardon of sin for our encouragement. When we are come to God, and should walk with him, it will have only the latter proposed, that there is pardon of sin, when the gospel principally proposeth the former, of keeping ourselves from sin. The grace of God bringing salvation having appeared unto us to that end and purpose.

Now the mind being entangled with this deceit, drawn off from its watch by it, diverted from the true ends of the gospel, doth several ways impose upon the will to obtain its consent.

(1st.) By a sudden surprisal in case of temptation. Temptation is the representation of a thing, as a present good, a particular good, which is a real evil, a general evil. Now when a temptation armed with opportunity and provocation, befalls the soul, the principle of grace in the will riseth up with a rejection and detestation of it. But on a sudden the mind being deceived by sin, breaks in upon the will, with a corrupt fallacious reasoning from gospel grace and mercy, which first staggers, then abates the will's opposition, and then causeth it to cast the scale by its consent of the side of temptation, presenting evil as a present good; and sin in the sight of God is conceived, though it be never committed. Thus is the seed of God sacrificed to Moloch, and the weapons of Christ abused to the service of the devil.

(2dly.) It doth it insensibly. It insinuates the poison of this corrupt reasoning by little and little, until it hath greatly prevailed. And as the whole effect of the doctrine of the gospel in holiness and obedience, consists in the soul's being cast into the frame and mould of it, Rom. vi. 17. so the whole of the apostacy from the gospel, is principally the casting of the soul into the mould of this false reasoning, that sin may be indulged unto upon the account of grace and pardon. Hereby is the soul gratified in sloth

and negligence, and taken off from its care, as to particular duties and avoidance of particular sins. It works the soul insensibly off from the mystery of the law of grace, to look for salvation as if we had never performed any duty, being after we have done all unprofitable servants, with a resting on sovereign mercy through the blood of Christ, and to attend unto duties with all diligence as if we looked for no mercy; that is, with no less care, though with more liberty and freedom. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavoureth by all means to work the soul from, and thereby debaucheth the will when its consent is required unto particular sins.

2dly. The deceived mind imposeth on the will to obtain its consent unto sin, by proposing unto it the advantages that may accrue and arise thereby, which is one medium whereby itself also is drawn away. It renders that which is absolutely evil, a present appearing good. So was it with Eve, Gen. iii. laying aside all considerations of the law, covenant, and threats of God, she all at once reflects upon the advantages, pleasures, and benefits, which she should obtain by her sin, and reckons them up to solicit the consent of her will. 'It is,' saith she, 'good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise.' What should she do then but eat it? her will consented and she did so accordingly. Pleas for obedience are laid out of the way, and only the pleasures of sin are taken under consideration. So saith Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 'Naboth's vineyard is near my house, and I may make it a garden of herbs,' therefore I must have it. These considerations a deceived mind imposed on his will; until it made him obstinate in the pursuit of his covetousness through perjury and murder, to the utter ruin of himself and his family. Thus is the guilt and tendency of sin hid under the covert of advantages and pleasures, and so is conceived or resolved on in the soul.

As the mind being withdrawn, so the affections being enticed and entangled, do greatly further the conception of sin in the soul by the consent of the will; and they do it two ways.

(1st.) By some hasty impulse and surprisal being themselves stirred up, incited, and drawn forth by some violent provocation, or suitable temptation, they put the whole soul as it were into a combustion, and draw the will into a con-

sent unto what they are provoked unto and entangled withal. So was the case of David in the matter of Nabal. A violent provocation from the extreme unworthy carriage of that foolish churl, stirs him up to wrath and revenge, 1 Sam. xxv. 13. He resolves upon it to destroy a whole family, the innocent with the guilty, ver. 33, 34. Self-revenge and murder were for the season conceived, resolved, consented unto, until God graciously took him off. His entangled, provoked affections, surprised his will to consent unto the conception of many bloody sins. The case was the same with Asa in his anger when he smote the prophet, and with Peter in his fear when he denied his Master. Let that soul which would take heed of conceiving sin, take heed of entangled affections. For sin may be suddenly conceived, the prevalent consent of the will may be suddenly obtained, which gives the soul a fixed guilt, though the sin itself be never actually brought forth.

(2dly.) Enticed affections procure the consent of the will by frequent solicitations, whereby they get ground insensibly upon it, and enthrone themselves. Take an instance in the sons of Jacob, Gen. xxxvii. 4. They hate their brother, because their father loved him. Their affections being enticed many new occasions fall out to entangle them farther, as his dreams and the like. This lay rankling in their hearts, and never ceased soliciting their wills, until they resolved upon his death. The unlawfulness, the unnaturalness of the action, the grief of their aged father, the guilt of their own souls, are all laid aside; that hatred and envy that they had conceived against him ceased not until they had got the consent of their wills to his ruin. This gradual progress of the prevalency of corrupt affections to solicit the soul unto sin, the wise man excellently describes, Prov. xxiii. 31—35. And this is the common way of sin's procedure in the destruction of souls which seem to have made some good engagements in the ways of God. When it hath entangled them with one temptation, and brought the will to some liking of it, that presently becomes another temptation, either to the neglect of some duty, or to the refusal of more light; and commonly that whereby men fall off utterly from God, is not that wherewith they are first entangled. And this may briefly suffice for the third progressive act of the

deceit of sin. It obtains the will's consent unto its conception, and by this means are multitudes of sins conceived in the heart which very little less defile the soul, or cause it to contract very little less guilt than if they were actually committed.

Unto what hath been spoken concerning the deceitfulness of indwelling sin in general, which greatly evidenceth its power and efficacy, I shall add as a close of this discourse, one or two particular ways of its deceitful actings, consisting in advantages that it maketh use of, and means of relieving itself against that disquisition which is made after it by the word and Spirit for its ruin. One head only of each sort we shall here name.

[1.] It makes great advantage of the darkness of the mind, to work out its design and intendments. The shades of a mind totally dark, that is, devoid utterly of saving grace, are the proper working-place of sin. Hence the effects of it are called, the 'works of darkness,' Ephes. v. 11. Rom. xiii. 12. as springing from thence. Sin works and brings forth by the help of it. The working of lust under the covert of a dark mind, is as it were the upper region of hell; for it lies at the next door to it for filth, horror, and confusion. Now there is a partial darkness abiding still in believers; they 'know but in part,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Though there be in them all a principle of saving light, the day-star is risen in their hearts; yet all the shades of darkness are not utterly expelled out of them in this life. And there are two parts, as it were, or principal effects of the remaining darkness that is in believers.

1st. Ignorance, or a nescience of the will of God, either 'juris' or 'facti,' of the rule and law in general, or of the reference of the particular fact that lies before the mind unto the law.

2dly. Error and mistakes, positively taking that for truth which is falsehood, and that for light which is darkness. Now, of both of these doth the law of sin make great advantage for the exerting of its power in the soul.

1st. Is there a remaining ignorance of any thing of the will of God, sin will be sure to make use of it, and improve it to the uttermost. Though Abimelech were not a believer, yet he was a person that had a moral integrity with him in his ways and actions; he declares himself to have had so, in

a solemn appeal to God the searcher of all hearts, even in that wherein he miscarried, Gen. xx. 5. But being ignorant that fornication was a sin, or so great a sin, as that it became not a morally honest man to defile himself with it, lust hurries him into that intention of evil in reference unto Sarah, as we have it there related. God complains that his people perished 'for lack of knowledge,' Hos. iv. 6. Being ignorant of the mind and will of God, they rushed into evil at every command of the law of sin. Be it as to any duty to be performed, or as to any sin to be committed, if there be in it darkness or ignorance of the mind about them, sin will not lose its advantage. Many a man being ignorant of the duty incumbent on him for the instruction of his family, casting the whole weight of it upon the public teaching, is by the deceitfulness of sin brought into an habitual sloth and negligence of duty. So much ignorance of the will of God and duty, so much advantage is given to the law of sin. And hence we may see what is that true knowledge which with God is acceptable; how exactly doth many a poor soul, who is low as to notional knowledge, yet walk with God. It seems they know so much, as sin hath not on that account much advantage against them; when others, high in their notions, give advantage to their lusts, even by their ignorance, though they know it not.

2dly. Error is a worse part or effect of the mind's darkness, and gives great advantage to the law of sin. There is indeed ignorance in every error, but there is not error in all ignorance, and so they may be distinguished. I shall need to exemplify this but with one consideration, and that is, of men, who being zealous for some error, do seek to suppress and persecute the truth. Indwelling sin desires no greater advantage. How will it every day, every hour, pour forth wrath, revilings, hard speeches; breathe revenge, murder, desolation, under the name perhaps of zeal. On this account we may see poor creatures pleasing themselves every day, as if they vaunted in their excellency, when they are foaming out their own shame. Under their real darkness and pretended zeal, sin sits securely, and fills pulpits, houses, prayers, streets, with as bitter fruits of envy, malice, wrath, hatred, evil surmises, false speakings, as full as they

can hold. The common issue with such poor creatures is, the holy, blessed, meek Spirit of God withdraws from them, and leaves them visibly and openly to that evil, froward, wrathful, worldly spirit, which the law of sin hath cherished and heightened in them. Sin dwells not any where more secure, than in such a frame. Thus, I say, it lays hold in particular of advantages to practise upon, with its deceitfulness, and therein also to exert its power in the soul, whereof this single instance of its improving the darkness of the mind unto its own ends, is a sufficient evidence.

[2.] It useth means of relieving itself against the pursuit that is made after it in the heart by the word and Spirit of grace. One also of its wiles, in the way of instance, I shall name in this kind, and that is the alleviation of its own guilt. It pleads for itself, that it is not so bad, so filthy, so fatal as is pretended; and this course of extenuation it proceeds in two ways.

1st. Absolutely; many secret pleas it will have that the evil which it tends unto is not so pernicious as conscience is persuaded that it is; it may be ventured on without ruin. These considerations it will strongly urge, when it is at work in a way of surprisal, when the soul hath no leisure or liberty to weigh its suggestions in the balance of the sanctuary, and not seldom is the will imposed on hereby, and advantages gotten to shift itself from under the sword of the Spirit. It is not such but that it may be let alone, or suffered to die of itself, which probably within awhile it will do; no need of that violence which in mortification is to be offered; it is time enough to deal with a matter of no greater importance hereafter; with other pleas like those before-mentioned.

2dly. Comparatively; and this is a large field for its deceit and subtlety to lurk in. Though it is an evil indeed to be relinquished, and the soul is to be made watchful against it, yet it is not of that magnitude and degree, as we may see in the lives of others, even saints of God, much less such as some saints of old have fallen into. By these and the like pretences, I say, it seeks to evade and keep its abode in the soul when pursued to destruction. And how little a portion of its deceitfulness is it that we have declared.

CHAP. XIII.

Several ways whereby the bringing forth of conceived sin is obstructed.

BEFORE we proceed to the remaining evidences of the power and efficacy of the law of sin, we shall take occasion from what hath been delivered, to divert unto one consideration that offers itself from that Scripture, which was made the bottom and foundation of our discourse of the general deceitfulness of sin; namely, James i. 14. The apostle tells us that 'lust conceiving brings forth sin;' seeming to intimate, that look what sin is conceived, that also is brought forth. Now placing the conception of sin, as we have done, in the consent of the will unto it, and reckoning, as we ought, the bringing forth of sin to consist in its actual commission, we know that these do not necessarily follow one another. There is a world of sin conceived in the womb of the wills and hearts of men, that is never brought forth. Our present business then shall be to inquire whence that comes to pass. I answer, then,

1. That this is not so, is no thanks unto sin, nor the law of it. What it conceives, it would bring forth: and that it doth not, is for the most part but a small abatement of its guilt. A determinate will of actual sinning, is actual sin. There is nothing wanting on sin's part, that every conceived sin is not actually accomplished. The obstacle and prevention lies on another hand.

2. There are two things that are necessary in the creature that hath conceived sin, for the bringing of it forth. First, Power. Secondly, Continuance in the will of sinning, until it be perpetrated and committed. Where these two are, actual sin will unavoidably ensue. It is evident, therefore, that that which hinders conceived sin from being brought forth, must effect either the power or the will of the sinner. This must be from God. And he hath two ways of doing it.

(1.) By his providence, whereby he obstructs the power of sinning.

(2.) By his grace, whereby he diverts or changes the will

of sinning. I do not mention these ways of God's dispensations thus distinctly, as though the one of them were always without the other; for there is much of grace in providential administrations, and much of the wisdom of providence seen in the dispensations of grace. But I place them in this distinction, because they appear most eminent therein. Providence in outward acts respecting the power of the creature; grace common or special in internal efficacy, respecting his will. And we shall begin with the first.

(1.) When sin is conceived, the Lord obstructs its production by his providence in taking away, or taking short, that power which is absolutely necessary for its bringing forth or accomplishment. As,

[1.] Life is the foundation of all power, the principle of operation. When that ceaseth, all power ceaseth with it. Even God himself, to evince the everlasting stability of his own power, gives himself the title of the 'living God.' Now he frequently obviates the power of exerting sin actually, by cutting short and taking away the lives of them that have conceived it. Thus he dealt with the army of Sennacherib, when, according as he had purposed, so he threatened that 'the Lord should not deliver Jerusalem out of his hand;' 2 Kings xviii. 35. God threatens to cut short his power, that he should not execute his intendment, chap. xix. 28. which he performs accordingly, by taking away the lives of his soldiers, ver. 35. without whom it was impossible that his conceived sin should be brought forth. This providential dispensation in the obstruction of conceived sin, Moses excellently sets forth in the case of Pharaoh, Exod. xv. 9, 10. 'The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lusts shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.' Sin's conception is fully expressed, and as full a prevention is annexed unto it. In like manner he dealt with the companies of fifties and their captains, who came to apprehend Elijah, 2 Kings i. 10, 11. Fire came down from heaven and consumed them, when they were ready to have taken him. And sundry other instances of the like nature might be

recorded. That which is of universal concernment, we have in that great providential alteration, which put a period to the lives of men. Men living hundreds of years, had a long season to bring forth the sins they had conceived; thereupon the earth was filled with violence, injustice, and rapine, and 'all flesh corrupted their ways;' Gen. vi. 12. 19. To prevent the like inundation of sin, God shortens the course of the pilgrimage of men in the earth, and reduces their lives to a much shorter measure. Besides this general law, God daily thus cuts off persons, who had conceived much mischief and violence in their hearts, and prevents the execution of it. 'Bloodthirsty and deceitful men do not live out half their days.' They have yet much work to do, might they have but space given them to execute the bloody and sinful purposes of their minds. The psalmist tells us, Psal. cxlvi. 4. 'In the day that the breath of man goeth forth, his thoughts perish:' he had many contrivances about sin, but now they are all cut off. So also, Eccles. viii. 12, 13. 'Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.' How long soever a wicked man lives, yet he dies judicially, and shall not abide to do the evil he had conceived.

But now seeing we have granted, that even believers themselves may conceive sin through the power and the deceitfulness of it, it may be inquired, whether God ever thus obviates its production and accomplishment in them, by cutting off and taking away their lives, so as that they shall not be able to perform it. I answer,

1st. That God doth not judicially cut off and take away the life of any of his, for this end and purpose, that he may thereby prevent the execution, or bringing forth of any particular sin that he had conceived, and which without that taking away he would have perpetrated. For,

(1st.) This is directly contrary to the very declared end of the patience of God towards them: 2 Pet. iii. 9. This is the very end of the longsuffering of God towards believers, that before they depart hence, they may come to the sense, acknowledgment, and repentance, of every known sin. This

is the constant and unchangeable rule of God's patience in the covenant of grace; which is so far from being in them an encouragement unto sin, that it is a motive to universal watchfulness against it; of the same nature with all gospel grace, and of mercy in the blood of Christ. Now this dispensation whereof we speak, would lie in a direct contradiction unto it.

(2dly.) This also flows from the former, that whereas conceived sin contains the whole nature of it, as our Saviour at large declares, Matt. v. And to be cut off under the guilt of it, to prevent its farther progress, argues a continuance in the purpose of it without repentance; it cannot be but they must perish for ever who are so judicially cut off. But God deals not so with his, he casts not off the people whom he did foreknow. And thence David prays for the patience of God before-mentioned, that it might not be so with him; Psal. xxxix. 13. 'O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more.' But yet,

2dly. There are some cases wherein God may and doth take away the lives of his own, to prevent the guilt that otherwise they would be involved in; as,

(1st.) In the coming of some great temptation and trial upon the world. God knowing that such and such of his would not not be able to withstand it, and hold out against it, but would dishonour him and defile themselves, he may, and doubtless often doth, take them out of the world, to take them out of the way of it; Isa. lvii. 1. 'The righteous is taken away from the evil to come;' not only the evil of punishment and judgment, but the evil of temptations and trials, which oftentimes proves much the worst of the two. Thus a captain in war will call off a soldier from his watch and guard, when he knows that he is not able, through some infirmity, to bear the stress and force of the enemy that is coming upon him.

2dly. In case of their engagement into any way not acceptable to him, through ignorance or not knowing of his his mind and will. This seems to have been the case of Josiah. And doubtless the Lord doth oftentimes thus proceed with his. When any of his own are engaged in ways that please him not, through the darkness and ignorance of their minds, that they may not proceed to farther evil or mischief, he calls

them off from their station and employment, and takes them to himself, where they shall err and mistake no more. But in ordinary cases, God hath other ways of diverting his own from sin than by killing of them, as we shall see afterward.

(2.) God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, by taking away and cutting short the power of them that had conceived it; so that though their lives continue, they shall not have that power without which it is impossible for them to execute what they had intended, or to bring forth what they had conceived. Hereof also we have sundry instances. This was the case with the builders of Babel, Gen. xi. Whatever it were in particular that they aimed at, it was in the pursuit of a design of apostacy from God. One thing requisite to the accomplishing of what they aimed at, was the oneness of their language; so God says, ver. 6, 'They have all one language, and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them that they have imagined to do.' In an ordinary way they will accomplish their wicked design. What course doth God now take to obviate their conceived sin? Doth he bring a flood upon them to destroy them, as in the old world sometime before? Doth he send his angel to cut them off, like the army of Sennacherib afterward? Doth he by any means take away their lives? No; their lives are continued, but he confounds their language, so that they cannot go on with their work, ver. 7. takes away that wherein their power consisted. In like manner did he proceed with the Sodomites, Gen. xix. 11, they were engaged in, and set upon the pursuit of, their filthy lusts. God smites them with blindness, so that they could not find the door where they thought to have used violence for the compassing of their ends; their lives were continued, and their will of sinning, but their power is cut short and abridged. His dealing with Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiii. 4. was of the same nature. He stretched out his hand to lay hold of the prophet, and it withered and became useless. And this is an eminent way of the effectual acting of God's providence in the world, for the stopping of that inundation of sin, which would overflow all the earth were every womb of it opened. He cuts men short of their moral power, whereby they should effect it. Many a wretch that hath conceived mischief against the church of God, hath by this means been

divested of his power, whereby he thought to accomplish it. Some have their bodies smitten with diseases, that they can no more serve their lusts, nor accompany them in the perpetrating of folly. Some are deprived of the instruments whereby they would work. There hath been, for many days, sin enough conceived to root out the generation of the righteous from the face of the earth, had men strength and ability to their will, did not God cut off and shorten their power, and the days of their prevalency. Psal. lxiv. 6. 'They search out iniquities, they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.' All things are in a readiness, the design is well laid, their counsels are deep and secret. What now shall hinder them from doing whatever they have imagined to do? ver. 7, 8. 'But God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded: so they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves.' God meets with them, brings them down, that they shall not be able to accomplish their design. And this way of God's preventing sin, seems to be, at least ordinarily, peculiar to the men of the world; God deals thus with them every day, and leaves them to pine away in their sins. They go all their days big with the iniquity they have conceived, and are greatly burdened that they cannot be delivered of it. The prophet tells us, that 'they practise iniquity that they had conceived, because it is in the power of their hand;' Micah ii. 1. If they have power for it, they will accomplish it; Ezek. xxii. 6. 'To their power they shed blood.' This is the measure of their sinning, even their power. They do, many of them, no more evil, they commit no more sin, than they can. Their whole restraint lies in being cut short in power, in one kind or another. Their bodies will not serve them for their contrived uncleannesses, nor their hands for their revenge and rapine, nor their instruments for persecution; but they go burdened with conceived sin, and are disquieted and tortured by it all their days. And hence they become in themselves, as well as unto others, 'a troubled sea that cannot rest;' Isa. lvii. 20.

It may be also in some cases, under some violent temptations, or in mistakes, God may thus obviate the accomplishment of conceived sin in his own. And there seems to be an instance of it in his dealing with Jehoshaphat, who had de-

signed, against the mind of God, to join in affinity with Ahab, and to send his ships with him to Tarshish; but God breaks his ships by a wind, that he could not accomplish what he had designed. But in God's dealing with his in this way, there is a difference from the same dispensation towards others; for,

[1.] It is so only in cases of extraordinary temptation. When, through the violence of temptation and craft of Satan, they are hurried from under the conduct of the law of grace, God one way or other takes away their power, or may do so, that they shall not be able to execute what they had designed. But this is an ordinary way of dealing with wicked men. This hook of God is upon them in the whole course of their lives; and they struggle with it, being as a wild bull in a net; Isa. li. 20. God's net is upon them, and they are filled with fury that they cannot do all the wickedness that they would.

[2.] God doth it not to leave them to wrestle with sin, and to attempt other ways of its accomplishment, upon the failure of that which they were engaged in; but by their disappointment awakens them to think of their condition, and what they are doing, and so consumes sin in the womb by the ways that shall afterward be insisted on. Some men's deprivation of power for the committing of conceived contrived sin, hath been sanctified to the changing of their hearts from all dalliances with that or other sins.

(3.) God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, by opposing an external hindering power unto sinners. He leaves them their lives, and leaves them power to do what they intend, only he raiseth up an opposite power to coerce, forbid, and restrain them. An instance hereof we have, 1 Sam. xiv. 45. Saul had sworn that Jonathan should be put to death, and, as far as appears, went on resolutely to have slain him; God stirs up the spirit of the people, they oppose themselves to the wrath and fury of Saul, and Jonathan is delivered. So also, 2 Chron. xxvi. 17—19. when king Uzziah would have in his own person offered incense contrary to the law, eighty men of the priests resisted him, and drove him out of the temple. And to this head are to be referred all the assistances which God stirreth up for deliverance of his people against the fury of persecutors. He raiseth up saviours or deliverers on Mount Sion, 'to judge the mount of

Edom.' So Rev. xii. 16. the dragon, and those acting under him, spirited by him, were in a furious endeavour for the destruction of the church; God stirs up the earth to her assistance, even men of the world, not engaged with others in the design of Satan, and, by their opposition, hinders them from the execution of their designed rage. Of this nature seems to be that dealing of God with his own people, Hos. ii. 6, 7. they were in the pursuit of their iniquities, following after their lovers; God leaves them for awhile to act in the folly of their spirits, but he sets a hedge and a wall before them, that they shall not be able to fulfil their designs and lusts.

(4.) God obviates the accomplishment of conceived sin, by removing or taking away the objects on whom, or about whom, the sin conceived was to be committed. Acts xii. 11. yields us a signal instance of this issue of providence. When the day was coming wherein Herod thought to have slain Peter who was shut up in prison, God sends and takes him away from their rage and lying in wait. So also was our Saviour himself taken away from the murderous rage of the Jews before his hour was come, John viii. 59. x. 39. Both primitive and latter times are full of stories to this purpose. Prison doors have been opened, and poor creatures appointed to die have been frequently rescued from the jaws of death. In the world itself, amongst the men thereof, adulterers and adulteresses, the sin of the one is often hindered and stifled by the taking away of the other. So wings were given to the woman to carry her into the wilderness, and to disappoint the world in the execution of their rage, Rev. xii. 14.

(5.) God doth this by some eminent diversions of the thoughts of men who had conceived sin, Gen. xxxvii. 24. The brethren of Joseph cast him into a pit, with an intent to famish him there: whilst they were, as it seems, pleasing themselves with what they had done, God orders a company of merchants to come by, and diverts their thoughts with that new object from the killing to the selling of their brother, ver. 26, 27. And how far therein they were subservient to the infinitely wise counsel of God, we know. Thus also, when Saul was in the pursuit of David, and was even ready to prevail against him to his destruction, God stirs up the Philistines to invade the land, which both di-

verted his thoughts, and drew the course of his actings another way, 1 Sam. xxvii. 27.

And these are some of the ways whereby God is pleased to hinder the bringing forth of conceived sin, by opposing himself and his providence to the power of the sinning creature. And we may a little in our passage take a brief view of the great advantages to faith and the church of God, which may be found in this matter. As,

[1.] This may give us a little insight into the ever-to-be-adored providence of God, by these and the like ways in great variety obstructing the breaking forth of sin in the world. It is he who makes those dams, and shuts up those floodgates of corrupted nature, that it shall not break forth in a deluge of filthy abominations to overwhelm the creation with confusion and disorder. As it was of old, so it is at this day; 'Every thought and imagination of the heart of man is evil, and that continually.' That all the earth is not in all places filled with violence, as it was of old, is merely from the mighty hand of God working effectually for the obstructing of sin. From hence alone it is, that the highways, streets, and fields, are not all filled with violence, blood, rapine, uncleanness, and every villany that the heart of man can conceive. O the infinite beauty of divine wisdom and providence in the government of the world! For the conservation of it asks daily no less power and wisdom than the first making of it did require.

[2.] If we will look to our own concernments, they will in a special manner enforce us to adore the wisdom and efficacy of the providence of God, in stopping the progress of conceived sin. That we are at peace in our houses, at rest in our beds, that we have any quiet in our enjoyments, is from hence alone. Whose person would not be defiled or destroyed? whose habitation would not be ruined? whose blood almost would not be shed, if wicked men had power to perpetrate all their conceived sin? It may be the ruin of some of us hath been conceived a thousand times. We are beholding to this providence of obstructing sin, for our lives, our families, our estates, our liberties, for whatsoever is, or may be, dear unto us. For may we not say sometimes with the psalmist, Psal. lvii. 4. 'My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons

of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword?' And how is the deliverance of men contrived from such persons? Psal. lviii. 6. 'God breaks their teeth in their mouths, even the great teeth of the young lions.' He keeps this fire from burning, or quencheth it when it is ready to break out into a flame. He breaks their spears and arrows, so that sometimes we are not so much as wounded by them. Some he cuts off and destroys, some he cuts short in their power, some he deprives of the instruments whereby alone they can work, some he prevents of their desired opportunities, or diverts by other objects for their lusts, and oftentimes causeth them to spend them among themselves one upon another. We may say therefore with the psalmist, Psal. civ. 24. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches:' and with the prophet, Hos. xiv. 9. 'Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent and he shall know them? all the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the trangressors shall fall therein.'

[3.] If these and the like are the ways whereby God obviates the bringing forth of conceived sin in wicked men, we may learn hence how miserable their condition is, and in what perpetual torment for the most part they spend their days. They 'are like a troubled sea,' saith the Lord, 'that cannot rest.' As they endeavour that others may have no peace, so it is certain that themselves have not any: the principle of sin is not impaired nor weakened in them, the will of sinning is not taken away. They have a womb of sin that is able to conceive monsters every moment. Yea, for the most part, they are forging and framing folly all the day long. One lust or other they are contriving how to satisfy; they are either devouring by malice and revenge, or vitiating by uncleanness, or trampling on by ambition, or swallowing down by covetousness, all that stand before them. Many of their follies and mischiefs they bring to the very birth, and are in pain to be delivered; but God every day fills them with disappointment, and shuts up the womb of sin. Some are filled with hatred of God's people all their days, and never once have an opportunity to exercise it. So David describes them, Psal. lix. 6. 'They re-

turn at evening, they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. They go up and down and belch out with their mouths, swords are in their lips;' ver. 7; and yet are not able to accomplish their designs. What tortures do such poor creatures live in? Envy, malice, wrath, revenge, devour their hearts by not getting vent. And when God hath exercised the other acts of his wise providence in cutting short their power, or opposing a greater power to them, when nothing else will do, he cuts them off in their sins, and to the grave they go full of purposes of iniquity. Others are no less hurried and diverted by the power of other lusts which they are not able to satisfy. This is the sore travail they are exercised with all their days. If they accomplish their designs they are more wicked and hellish than before; and if they do not, they are filled with vexation and discontentment. This is the portion of them who know not the Lord, nor the power of his grace. Envy not their condition; notwithstanding their outward glittering shew, their hearts are full of anxiety, trouble, and sorrow.

[4.] Do we see sometimes the floodgates of men's lusts and rage set open against the church and interest of it, and doth prevalency attend them, and power is for a season on their side; let not the saints of God despond. He hath unspeakably various and effectual ways for the stifling of their conceptions, to give them dry breasts, and a miscarrying womb. He can stop their fury when he pleaseth. 'Surely,' saith the psalmist, 'the wrath of man shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain;' Psal. lxxvi. 10. When so much of their wrath is let out as shall exalt his praise, he can when he pleaseth set up a power, greater than the combined strength of all sinning creatures, and restrain the remainder of the wrath that they had conceived. 'He shall cut off the spirit of princes, he is terrible to the kings of the earth;' ver. 12. Some he will cut off and destroy, some he will terrify and affright, and prevent the rage of all. He can knock them on the head, or break out their teeth, or chain up their wrath, and who can oppose him?

[5.] Those who have received benefit by any of the ways mentioned, may know to whom they owe their preservation, and not look on it as a common thing. When you have conceived sin, hath God weakened your power for sin, or denied you opportunity, or took away the object of your

lusts, or diverted your thoughts by new providences? know assuredly that you have received mercy thereby. Though God deal not these providences always in a subserviency to the covenant of grace, yet there is always mercy in them, always a call in them to consider the author of them. Had not God thus dealt with you, it may be this day you had been a terror to yourselves, a shame to your relations, and under the punishment due to some notorious sins which you had conceived. Besides, there is commonly an additional guilt in sin brought forth, above what is in the mere conception of it. It may be others would have been ruined by it here, or drawn into a partnership in sin by it, and so have been eternally ruined by it, all which are prevented by these providences, and eternity will witness, that there is a singularity of mercy in them. Do not look then on any such things as common accidents, the hand of God is in them all; and that a merciful hand if not despised; if it be, yet God doth good to others by it, the world is the better, and you are not so wicked as you would be.

[6.] We may also see hence the great use of magistracy in the world, that great appointment of God. Amongst other things, it is peculiarly subservient to this holy providence, in obstructing the bringing forth of conceived sin; namely, by the terror of him that bears the sword. God fixes that on the hearts of evil men which he expresseth, Rom. xiii. 4. 'If thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for the power beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on them that do evil.' God fixes this on the hearts of men, and by the dread and terror of it closeth the womb of sin, that it shall not bring forth. When there was no king in Israel, none to put to rebuke, and none of whom evil men were afraid, there was woful work and havoc amongst the children of men made in the world, as we may see in the last chapters of the book of Judges. The greatest mercies and blessings that in this world we are made partakers of, next to them of the gospel and covenant of grace, come to us through this channel and conduit. And indeed, this whereof we have been speaking, is the proper work of magistracy, namely, to be subservient to the providence of God in obstructing the bringing forth of conceived sin.

These then are some of the ways whereby God providen-

tially prevents the bringing forth of sin, by opposing obstacles to the power of the sinner. And by them sin is not consumed, but shut up in the womb. Men are not burdened for it, but with it; not laden in their hearts and consciences with its guilt, but perplexed with its power, which they are not able to exert and satisfy.

The way that yet remains for consideration whereby God obviates the production of conceived sin, is his working on the will of the sinners, so making sin to consume away in the womb.

There are two ways in general whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin, by working on the will of the sinner; and they are, 1st. by restraining grace: 2dly. by renewing grace. He doth it sometimes the one way, sometimes the other. The first of these is common to regenerate and unregenerate persons, the latter peculiar to believers; and God doth it variously as to particulars by them both. We shall begin with the first of them.

1st. God doth this in the way of restraining grace by some arrow of particular conviction, fixed in the heart and conscience of the sinner, in reference unto the particular sin which he had conceived. This staggers and changes the mind, as to the particular intended, causeth the hands to hang down, and the weapons of lust to fall out of them. Hereby conceived sin proves abortive. How God doth this work, by what immediate touches, strokes, blows, rebukes of his Spirit; by what reasonings, arguments, and commotions of men's own consciences, is not for us thoroughly to find out. It is done, as was said, in unspeakable variety, and the works of God are past finding out. But as to what light may be given unto it from Scripture instances, after we have manifested the general way of God's procedure, it shall be insisted on.

Thus then God dealt in the case of Esau and Jacob. Esau had long conceived his brother's death, he comforted himself with the thoughts of it, and resolutions about it, Gen. xxvii. 41. as is the manner of profligate sinners. Upon his first opportunity he comes forth to execute his intended rage, and Jacob concludes that he would 'smite the mother with the children;' Gen. xxxii. 11. An opportunity is presented unto this wicked and profane person, to bring

forth that sin that had lain in his heart now twenty years; he hath full power in his hand to perform his purpose. In the midst of this posture of things, God comes in upon his heart with some secret and effectual working of his Spirit and power, changeth him from his purpose, causeth his conceived sin to melt away, that he falls upon the neck of him with embraces, whom he thought to have slain.

Of the same nature, though the way of it was peculiar, was his dealing with Laban the Syrian, in reference to the same Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 24. By a dream, a vision in the night, God hinders him from so much as speaking roughly to him. It was with him as in Micah ii. 1. he had devised evil on his bed, and when he thought to have practised it in the morning, God interposed in a dream, and hides sin from him, as he speaks, Job xxxiii. 15—17. To the same purpose is that of the psalmist concerning the people of God, Psal. cvi. 46. 'He made them to be pitied of all those who carried them captive.' Men usually deal in rigour with those whom they have taken captive in war. It was the way of old to rule captives with force and cruelty. Here God turns and changes their hearts, not in general unto himself, but to this particular of respect to his people. And this way in general doth God every day prevent the bringing forth of a world of sin. He sharpens arrows of conviction upon the spirits of men, as to the particular that they are engaged in. Their hearts are not changed as to sin, but their minds are altered as to this or that sin. They break, it may be, the vessel they had fashioned, and go to work upon some other. Now that we may a little see into the ways whereby God doth accomplish this work, we must premise the ensuing considerations.

(1st.) That the general medium wherein the matter of restraining grace doth consist, whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth of sin, doth lie in certain arguments and reasonings, presented to the mind of the sinner, whereby he is induced to desert his purpose, to change and alter his mind, as to the sin he had conceived. Reasons against it are presented unto him, which prevail upon him to relinquish his design, and give over his purpose. This is the general way of the working of restraining grace, it is by arguments and reasonings rising up against the perpetration of conceived sin.

(2dly.) That no arguments or reasonings, as such, materially considered, are sufficient to stop or hinder any purpose of sinning, or to cause conceived sin to prove abortive, if the sinner have power and opportunity to bring it forth. They are not in themselves, and on their own account restraining grace; for if they were, the administration and communication of grace, as grace, were left unto every man who is able to give advice against sin. Nothing is, nor can be called grace, though common, and such as may perish, but with respect unto its peculiar relation to God. God, by the power of his Spirit, making arguments and reasons effectual and prevailing, turns that to be grace, I mean of this kind, which in itself, and in its own nature, was bare reason. And that efficacy of the Spirit, which the Lord puts forth in these persuasions and motives, is that which we call restraining grace. These things being premised, we shall now consider some of the arguments which we find that he hath made use of to this end and purpose.

[1st.] God stops many men in their ways upon the conception of sin, by an argument taken from the difficulty, if not impossibility, of doing that they aim at. They have a mind unto it, but God sets a hedge and a wall before them, that they shall judge it to be so hard and difficult to accomplish what they intend, that it is better for them to let it alone and give over. Thus Herod would have put John Baptist to death upon the first provocation, but he feared the multitude, because they accounted him as a prophet, Matt. xiv. 5. He had conceived his murder, and was free for the execution of it. God raised this consideration in his heart, If I kill him, the people will tumultuate, he hath a great party amongst them, and sedition will arise that may cost me my life, or kingdom. He feared the multitude, and durst not execute the wickedness he had conceived, because of the difficulty he foresaw he should be entangled withal. And God made the argument effectual for the season; for otherwise we know that men will venture the utmost hazards for the satisfaction of their lusts; as he also did afterward. The Pharisees were in the very same state and condition, Matt. xxi. 26. they would fain have decried the ministry of John, but durst not for fear of the people; and, ver. 46. of the same chapter, by the same argument were they deterred

from killing our Saviour, who had highly provoked them by a parable, setting out their deserved and approaching destruction. They durst not do it for fear of a tumult among the people, seeing they looked on him as a prophet. Thus God overawes the hearts of innumerable persons in the world every day, and causeth them to desist from attempting to bring forth the sins which they had conceived. Difficulties they shall be sure to meet withal, yea, it is likely, if they should attempt it, it would prove impossible for them to accomplish. We owe much of our quiet in this world, unto the efficacy given to this consideration in the hearts of men by the Holy Ghost: adulteries, rapines, murders, are obviated and stifled by it. Men would engage into them daily, but that they judge it impossible for them to fulfil what they aim at.

[2dly.] God doth it by an argument taken 'ab incommodo,' from the inconveniencies, evils, and troubles that will befall men in the pursuit of sin. If they follow it, this or that inconvenience will ensue; this trouble, this evil, temporal or eternal. And this argument, as managed by the Spirit of God, is the great engine in his hand, whereby he casts up banks and gives bounds to the lusts of men, that they break not out to the confusion of all that order and beauty which yet remains in the works of his hands. Paul gives us the general import of this argument, Rom. ii. 14, 15. 'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.' If any men in the world may be thought to be given up to pursue and fulfil all the sins that their lusts can conceive, it is those that have not the law, to whom the written law of God doth not denounce the evil that attends it. But though they have it not, saith the apostle, they shew forth the work of it, they do many things which it requireth, and forbear or abstain from many things that it forbiddeth, and so shew forth its work and efficacy. But whence is it that they so do? Why their thoughts accuse or excuse them. It is from the consideration and arguings that they have within themselves about sin and its consequents, which

prevail upon them to abstain from many things that their hearts would carry them out unto. For conscience is a man's prejudging of himself, with respect unto the future judgment of God. Thus Felix was staggered in his pursuit of sin, when he trembled at Paul's preaching of righteousness and judgment to come; Acts xxiv. 25. So Job tells us that the consideration of punishment from God hath a strong influence on the minds of men to keep them from sin; chap. xxxi. 1—3. How the Lord makes use of that consideration, even towards his own, when they have broken the cords of his love and cast off the rule of his grace for a season, I have before declared.

[3dly.] God doth this same work by making effectual an argument, 'ab inutili,' from the unprofitableness of the thing that men are engaged in. By this were the brethren of Joseph stayed from slaying him, Gen. xxxvii. 26, 27. 'What profit is it,' say they, 'if we slay our brother and conceal his blood?' We shall get nothing by it; it will bring in no advantage or satisfaction unto us. And the heads of this way of God's obstructing conceived sin, or the springs of these kinds of arguments, are so many and various, that it is impossible to insist particularly upon them. There is nothing present or to come, nothing belonging to this life or another, nothing desirable or undesirable, nothing good or evil, but, at one time or another, an argument may be taken from it for the obstructing of sin.

[4thly.] God accomplisheth this work by arguments taken 'ab honesto,' from what is good and honest, what is comely, praiseworthy, and acceptable unto himself. This is the great road wherein he walks with the saints under their temptations, or in their conceptions of sin. He recovers effectually upon their minds a consideration of all those springs and motives to obedience, which are discovered and proposed in the gospel, some at one time, some at another. He minds them of his own love, mercy, and kindness; his eternal love, with the fruits of it, whereof themselves have been made partakers. He minds them of the blood of his Son, his cross, sufferings, tremendous undertaking in the work of mediation, and the concernment of his heart, love, honour, name, in their obedience; minds them of the love of the Spirit, with all his consolations which they have been

made partakers of, and privileges wherewith by him they have been intrusted: minds them of the gospel, the glory and beauty of it, as it is revealed unto their souls; minds them of the excellency and comeliness of obedience, of their performance of that duty they owe to God, that peace, quietness, and serenity of mind, that they have enjoyed therein. On the other side he minds them of being a provocation by sin unto the eyes of his glory, saying in their hearts, Do not that abominable thing which my soul hateth; minds them of their wounding the Lord Jesus Christ, and putting him to shame; of their grieving the Holy Spirit, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption; of their defiling his dwelling-place; minds them of the reproach, dishonours, scandal, which they bring on the gospel and the profession thereof; minds them of the terrors, darkness, wounds, want of peace, that they may bring upon their own souls. From these and the like considerations doth God put a stop to the law of sin in the heart, that it shall not go on to bring forth the evil which it hath conceived. I could give instances in arguments of all these several kinds recorded in the Scripture, but it would be too long a work for us, who are now engaged in a design of another nature. But one or two examples may be mentioned. Joseph resists his first temptation on one of these accounts, Gen. xxxix. 9. 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' The evil of sinning against God, his God, that consideration alone detains him from the least inclination to his temptation. It is sin against God to whom I owe all obedience, the God of my life and of all my mercies: I will not do it. The argument wherewith Abigail prevailed on David, 1 Sam. xxv. 31. to withhold him from self-revenge and murder, was of the same nature, and he acknowledgeth that it was from the Lord, ver. 32. I shall add no more, for all the Scripture motives which we have to duty, made effectual by grace, are instances of this way of God's procedure.

Sometimes, I confess, God secretly works the hearts of men by his own finger, without the use and means of such arguments as those insisted on, to stop the progress of sin. So he tells Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6. 'I have withheld thee from sinning against me.' Now this could not be done by any of the arguments which we have insisted on, because

Abimelech knew not that the thing he intended was sin; and therefore he pleads that in the 'integrity of his heart and innocency of his hands' he did it, ver. 5. God turned about his will and thoughts, that he should not accomplish his intention; but by what ways or means is not revealed. Nor is it evident what course he took in the change of Esau's heart, when he came out against his brother to destroy him, Gen. xxxiii. 4. Whether he stirred up in him a fresh spring of natural affections, or caused him to consider what grief by this means he should bring to his aged father, who loved him so tenderly; or whether, being now grown great and wealthy, he more and more despised the matter of difference between him and his brother, and so utterly slighted it, is not known. It may be God did it by an immediate powerful act of his Spirit upon his heart, without any actual intervening of these or any of the like considerations. Now, though the things mentioned are in themselves at other times feeble and weak, yet when they are managed by the Spirit of God to such an end and purpose, they certainly become effectual, and are the matter of his preventing grace.

2dly. God prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin by real spiritual saving grace, and that either in the first conversion of sinners, or in the following supplies of it.

(1st.) This is one part of the mystery of his grace and love. He meets men sometimes in their highest resolutions for sin, with the highest efficacy of his grace. Hereby he manifests the power of his own grace, and gives the soul a farther experience of the law of sin, when it takes such a farewell of it, as to be changed in the midst of its resolutions to serve the lusts thereof. By this he melts down the lusts of men, causeth them to wither at the root, that they shall no more strive to bring forth what they have conceived, but be filled with shame and sorrow at their conception. An example and instance of this proceeding of God, for the use and instruction of all generations, we have in Paul. His heart was full of wickedness, blasphemy, and persecution; his conception of them was come unto rage and madness, and a full purpose of exercising them all to the utmost; so the story relates it, Acts ix. so himself declares the state to have been with him, Acts xxvi. 9—12. 1 Tim. i. 13. In the midst of all this violent pursuit of sin, a voice from heaven shuts up the womb

and dries the breasts of it, and he cries, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts ix. 6. The same person seems to intimate, that this is the way of God's procedure with others, even to meet them with his converting grace in the height of their sin and folly, 1 Tim. i. 16. For he himself, he says, was a pattern of God's dealing with others; as he dealt with him, so also would he do with some such-like sinners. 'For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.' And we have not a few examples of it in our own days. Sundry persons on set purpose going to this or that place to deride and scoff at the dispensation of the word, have been met withal in the very place wherein they designed to serve their lusts and Satan, and have been cast down at the foot of God. This way of God's dealing with sinners is at large set forth, Job xxxiii. 15—18. Dionysius the Areopagite is another instance of this work of God's grace and love. Paul is dragged either by him or before him, to plead for his life, as a setter forth of strange gods, which at Athens was death by the law. In the midst of this frame of spirit God meets with him by converting grace, sin withers in the womb, and he cleaves to Paul and his doctrine; Acts xvii. 18—34. The like dispensation towards Israel we have, Hos. xi. 7—10. But there is no need to insist on more instances of this observation. God is pleased to leave no generation unconvinced of this truth, if they do but attend to their own experiences, and the examples of this work of his mercy amongst them. Every day, one or other is taken in the fulness of the purpose of his heart to go on in sin, in this or that sin, and is stopped in his course by the power of converting grace.

(2dly.) God doth it by the same grace in the renewed communications of it, that is, by special assisting grace. This is the common way of his dealing with believers in this case. That they also, through the deceitfulness of sin, may be carried on to the conceiving of this or that sin, was before declared. God puts a stop to their progress, or rather, to the prevalency of the law of sin in them, and that by giving in unto them special assistances needful for their preservation and deliverance. As David says of himself, Psal. lxxiii. 2. His 'feet were almost gone, his steps had

well nigh slipped.' He was at the very brink of unbelieving despairing thoughts and conclusions about God's providence in the government of the world; from whence he was recovered, as he afterward declares. So is it with many a believer, he is oftentimes at the very brink, at the very door of some folly or iniquity, when God puts in by the efficacy of actually assisting grace, and recovers them to an obedientiał frame of heart again. And this is a peculiar work of Christ, wherein he manifests and exerts his faithfulness towards his own. Heb. ii. 18. 'He is able to succour them that are tempted.' It is not an absolute power, but a power clothed with mercy that is intended. Such a power as is put forth from a sense of the suffering of poor believers under their temptations. And how doth he exercise this merciful ability towards us? chap. iv. 16. He gives forth and we find in him 'grace to help in a time of need; seasonable help and assistance for our deliverance, when we are ready to be overpowered by sin and temptation. When lust hath conceived, and is ready to bring forth, when the soul lies at the brink of some iniquity, he gives in seasonable help, relief, deliverance, and safety. Here lies a great part of the care and faithfulness of Christ towards his poor saints; he will not suffer them to be worried with the power of sin, nor to be carried out unto ways that shall dishonour the gospel, or fill them with shame and reproach, and so render them useless in the world; but he steps in with the saving relief and assistance of his grace, stops the course of sin, and makes them in himself more than conquerors. And this assistance lies under the promise, 1 Cor. x. 13. 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' Temptation shall try us, it is for our good; many holy ends doth the Lord compass and bring about by it. But when we are tried to the utmost of our ability, so that one assault more would overbear us, a way of escape is provided. And as this may be done several ways, as I have elsewhere declared, so this we are now upon is one of the most eminent, namely, by supplies of grace to enable the soul to bear up, resist, and conquer. And when once God

begins to deal in this way of love with a soul, he will not cease to add one supply after another, until the whole work of his grace and faithfulness be accomplished. An example hereof we have, Isa. lvii. 17, 18. Poor sinners there are so far captivated to the power of their lusts, that the first and second dealings of God with them are not effectual for their delivery; but he will not give them over, he is in the pursuit of a design of love towards them, and so ceaseth not until they are recovered. These are the general heads of the second way whereby God hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, namely, by working on the will of the sinner. He doth it either by common convictions or special grace, so that of their own accord they shall let go the purpose and will of sinning that they are risen up unto. And this is no mean way of his providing for his own glory, and the honour of his gospel in the world, whose professors would stain the whole beauty of it, were they left to themselves to bring forth all the evil that is conceived in their hearts.

(3dly.) Besides these general ways, there is one yet more special, that at once worketh both upon the power and will of the sinner; and this is the way of afflictions, concerning which one word shall close this discourse. Afflictions, I say, work by both these ways in reference unto conceived sin. They work providentially on the power of the creature. When a man hath conceived a sin, and is in full purpose of the pursuit of it, God oftentimes sends a sickness and abates his strength, or a loss cuts him short in his plenty, and so takes him off from the pursuit of his lusts, though it may be his heart is not weaned from them. His power is weakened, and he cannot do the evil he would. In this sense it belongs to the first way of God's obviating the production of sin. Great afflictions work sometimes, not from their own nature immediately and directly, but from the gracious purpose and intendment of him that sends them. He insinuates into the dispensation of them that of grace and power, of love and kindness, which shall effectually take off the heart and mind from sin. Psal. cxix. 67. 'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I learned thy commandments.' And in this way, because of the predominancy of renewing and assisting grace, they belong unto the latter means of preventing sin.

And these are some of the ways whereby it pleaseth God to put a stop to the progress of sin, both in believers and unbelievers, which at present we shall instance in; and if we would endeavour farther to search out his ways unto perfection, yet we must still conclude that it is but a little portion which we know of him.

CHAP. XIV.

The power of sin farther demonstrated by the effects it hath had in the lives of professors. First, in actual sins. Secondly, in habitual declensions.

We are now to proceed unto other evidences of that sad truth which we are in the demonstration of. But the main of our work being past through, I shall be more brief in the management of the arguments that do remain.

That then which in the next place may be fixed upon, is the demonstration which this law of sin hath in all ages given of its power and efficacy, by the woful fruits that it hath brought forth, even in believers themselves. Now these are of two sorts. 1. The great actual eruptions of sin in their lives. 2. Their habitual declensions from the frames, state, and condition, of obedience and communion with God, which they had obtained; both which by the rule of James, before unfolded, are to be laid to the account of this law of sin, and belong unto the fourth head of its progress, and are both of them convincing evidences of its power and efficacy.

1. Consider the fearful eruptions of actual sins that have been in the lives of believers, and we shall find our position evidenced. Should I go through at large with this consideration, I must recount all the sad and scandalous failings of the saints that are left on record in the holy Scripture. But the particulars of them are known to all; so that I shall not need to mention them, nor the many aggravations that in their circumstances they are attended with. Only some few things tending to the rendering of our present consideration of them useful, may be remarked. As,

(1.) They are most of them in the lives of men that

were not of the lowest form or ordinary sort of believers, but of men that had a peculiar eminency in them on the account of their walking with God in their generation. Such were Noah, Lot, David, Hezekiah, and others. They were not men of an ordinary size, but higher than their brethren by the shoulders and upwards in profession, yea, in real holiness. And surely that must needs be of a mighty efficacy that could hurry such giants in the ways of God into such abominable sins as they fell into. An ordinary engine could never have turned them out of the course of their obedience. It was a poison that no athletic constitution of spiritual health, no antidote could withstand.

(2.) And these very men fell not into their great sins at the beginning of their profession, when they had had but little experience of the goodness of God, of the sweetness and pleasantness of obedience, of the power and craft of sin, of its impulsions, solicitations and surprisals, but after a long course of walking with God, and acquaintance with all these things, together with innumerable motives unto watchfulness. Noah, according to the lives of men in those days of the world, had walked uprightly with God some hundreds of years before he was so surprised as he was. Gen. ix. Righteous Lot seems to have been towards the end of his days, ere he defiled himself with the abominations recorded. David, in a short life, had as much experience of grace and sin, and as much close, spiritual communion with God, as ever had any of the sons of men, before he was cast to the ground by this law of sin. So was it with Hezekiah in his degree, which was none of the meanest. Now to set upon such persons, so well acquainted with its power and deceit, so armed and provided against it, that had been conquerors over it for so many years, and to prevail against them, it argues a power and efficacy too mighty for every thing but the Spirit of the Almighty to withstand. Who can look to have a greater stock of inherent grace than those men had; to have more experience of God, and the excellency of his ways, the sweetness of his love, and of communion with him, than they had? who hath either better furniture to oppose sin withal, or more obligation so to do, than they? and yet we see how fearfully they were prevailed against.

(3.) As if God had permitted their falls on set purpose, that we might learn to be wary of this powerful enemy, they all of them fell out when they had newly received great and stupendous mercies from the hand of God, that ought to have been strong obligations unto diligence and watchfulness in close obedience. Noah was but newly come forth of that world of waters wherein he saw the ungodly world perishing for their sins, and himself preserved by that astonishable miracle which all ages must admire. Whilst the world's desolation was an hourly remembrancer unto him of his strange preservation by the immediate care and hand of God, he falls into drunkenness. Lot had newly seen that which every one that thinks on cannot but tremble. He saw, as one speaks, hell coming out of heaven upon unclean sinners, the greatest evidence, except the cross of Christ, that God ever gave in his providence of the judgment to come. He saw himself and children delivered by the special care and miraculous hand of God; and yet, whilst these strange mercies were fresh upon him, he fell into drunkenness and incest. David was delivered out of all his troubles, and had the necks of his enemies given him round about, and he makes use of his peace from a world of trials and troubles to contrive murder and adultery. Immediately, it was, after Hezekiah's great and miraculous deliverance, that he falls into his carnal pride and boasting. I say, their falls in such seasons, seem to be permitted on set purpose, to instruct us all in the truth that we have in hand; so that no persons, in no seasons, with what furniture of grace soever, can promise themselves security from its prevalency, any other ways than by keeping close constantly to him, who hath supplies to give out that are above its reach and efficacy. Methinks this should make us look about us. Are we better than Noah, who had that testimony from God, that he was a perfect man in his generation, and walked with God? Are we better than Lot, whose righteous soul was vexed with the evil deeds of ungodly men, and is thereof commended by the Holy Ghost? Are we more holy, wise, and watchful than David, who obtained this testimony, that he was 'a man after God's own heart?' or better than Hezekiah, who appealed to God himself, that he had served him uprightly, with a perfect heart?

And yet what prevalency this law of sin wrought in and over them, we see. And there is no end of the like examples; they are all set up as buoys to discover unto us the sands, the shelves, the rocks, whereupon they made their shipwreck, to their hazard, danger, loss, yea, and would have done to their ruin, had not God been pleased in his faithfulness graciously to prevent it. And this is the first part of this evidence of the power of sin, from its effects.

2. It manifests its power in the habitual declensions from zeal and holiness, from the frames, state and condition of obedience and communion with God, whereunto they had attained, which are found in many believers. Promises of growth and improvement are many and precious; the means excellent and effectual; the benefits great and unspeakable: yet it often falls out, that instead hereof, decays and declensions are found upon professors, yea, in and upon many of the saints of God. Now whereas this must needs principally and chiefly be from the strength and efficacy of indwelling sin, and is therefore a great evidence thereof; I shall first evince the observation itself to be true, namely, that some of the saints themselves do oftentimes so decline from that growth and improvement in faith, grace, and holiness which might justly be expected from them; and then shew, that the cause of this evil lies in that, that we are treating of. And that it is the cause of total apostacy in unsound professors, shall be after declared. But this is a greater work which we have in hand. The prevailing upon true believers unto a sinful declension and gradual apostacy, requires a putting forth of more strength and efficacy than the prevailing upon unsound professors unto total apostacy. As the wind, which will blow down a dead tree that hath no root to the ground, will scarcely shake or bow a living well-rooted tree. But this it will do. There is mention made in the Scripture of the first ways of David, and they are commended above his latter, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. The last ways even of David were tainted with the power of indwelling sin. Though we have mention only of the actual eruption of sin, yet that uncleanness, and pride which was working in him in his numbering of the people, were certainly rooted in a declension from his first frame. Those rushes did not grow without mire. David

would not have done so in his younger days, when he followed God in the wilderness of temptations and trials, full of faith, love, humility, brokenness of heart, zeal, tender affection unto all the ordinances of God, all which were eminent in him. But his strength is impaired by the efficacy and deceitfulness of sin; his locks cut, and he becomes a prey to vile lusts and temptations. We have a notable instance in most of the churches that our Saviour awakens to the consideration of their condition, in the Revelations. We may single out one of them: many good things were there in the church of Ephesus, chap. ii. 2, 3. for which it is greatly commended, but yet it is charged with a decay, a declension, a gradual falling off and apostacy: ver. 4, 5. 'Thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works.' There was a decay both inward, in the frame of heart, as to faith and love; and outward, as to obedience and works, in comparison of what they had formerly, by the testimony of Christ himself. The same also might be shewed concerning the rest of those churches, only one or two of them excepted. Five of them are charged with decays and declensions. Hence there is mentioned in the Scripture of the 'kindness of youth,' of the 'love of espousals,' with great commendation, Jer. ii. 2, 3. of our 'first faith,' 1 Tim. v. 12. of 'the beginning of our confidence,' Heb. iii. 14. And cautions are given, that we 'lose not the things that we have wrought,' 2 John 8. But what need we look back or search for instances to confirm the truth of this observation? An habitual declension from first engagements unto God, from first attainments of communion with God, from first strictness in duties of obedience, is ordinary and common amongst professors.

Might we to this purpose take a general view of the professors in these nations, among whom the lot of the best of us will be found in part or in whole, in somewhat or in all, to fall, we might be plentifully convinced of the truth of this observation.

(1.) Is their zeal for God as warm, living, vigorous, effectual, solicitous, as it was in their first giving themselves unto God? Or rather, is there not a common, slight, selfish frame of spirit in the room of it come upon most professors? Iniquity hath abounded, and their love hath waxed cold. Was it not of old a burden to their spirits to hear the name, and ways,

and worship of God blasphemed and profaned? could they not have said with the psalmist, Psal. cxix. 136. 'Rivers of water run down our eyes because men keep not thy law?' Were not their souls solicitous about the interest of Christ in the world, like Eli's about the ark? Did they not contend earnestly for the truth once delivered to the saints, and every parcel of it? especially wherein the grace of God, and the glory of the gospel was especially concerned: did they not labour to judge and condemn the world by a holy and separate conversation? And do now the generality of professors abide in this frame? have they grown, and made improvement in it? or is there not a coldness and indifferency grown upon the spirits of many in this thing? Yea, do not many despise all these things, and look upon their own former zeal as folly? May we not see many who have formerly been of esteem in ways of profession, become daily a scorn and reproach through their miscarriages, and that justly to the men of the world? Is it not with them as it was of old with the daughters of Sion, (Isa. iii. 24.) when God judged them for their sins and wantonness? Hath not the world and self utterly ruined their profession? and are they not regardless of the things wherein they have formerly declared a singular concernment? Yea, are not some come, partly on one pretence, partly on another, to an open enmity unto, and hatred of, the ways of God? they please them no more, but are evil in their eyes. But not to mention such open apostates any farther, whose hypocrisy the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly judge; how is it with the best? are not almost all men grown cold and slack as to these things? are they not less concerned in them than formerly? are they not grown weary, selfish in their religion, and so things be indifferent well at home, scarce care how they go abroad in the world? At least do they not prefer their ease, credit, safety, secular advantages, before these things? A frame that Christ abhors, and declares, that those in whom it prevails are none of his. Some indeed seem to retain a good zeal for truth, but wherein they make the fairest appearance, therein will they be found to be most abominable: they cry out against errors, not for truth, but for parties' and interests' sake. Let a man be on their party, and promote their interest, be he never so corrupt in his

judgment, he is embraced, and it may be admired. This is not zeal for God, but for a man's self. It is not 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,' but 'Master, forbid them because they follow not with us.' Better it were doubtless for men never to pretend unto any zeal at all than to substitute such wrathful selfishness in the room of it.

(2.) Is men's delight in the ordinances and worship of God the same as in former days? Do they find the same sweetness and relish in them as they have done of old? How precious hath the word been to them formerly? What joy and delight have they had in attendance thereon? How would they have run and gone to have been made partakers of it, where it was dispensed in its power and purity, in the evidence and dêmonstration of the Spirit? Did they not call the sabbath their delight, and was not the approach of it a real joy unto their souls? Did they not long after the converse and communion of saints? and could they not undergo manifold perils for the attainment of it? And doth this frame still abide upon them? Are there not decays and declensions to be found amongst them? May it not be said, Grey hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not? Yea, are not men ready to say with them of old, 'What a weariness is it?' Mal. i. 3. It is even a burden and a weariness to be tied up to the observation of all these ordinances. What need we be at all so strict in the observation of the sabbath? What need we hear so often? What need this distinction in hearing? Insensibly a great disrespect, yea, even a contempt of the pleasant and excellent ways of Christ and his gospel, is fallen upon many professors.

(3.) May not the same conviction be farther carried on, by an inquiry into the universal course of obedience, and the performance of duties that men have been engaged in? Is there the same conscientious tenderness of sinning abiding in many, as was in days of old? the same exact performance of private duties? the same love to the brethren? the same readiness for the cross? the same humility of mind and spirit? the same self-denial? The steam of men's lusts, wherewith the air is tainted, will not suffer us so to say.

We need then go no farther than this wretched genera-

tion wherein we live, to evince the truth of the observation laid down, as the foundation of the instance insisted on; the Lord give repentance before it be too late.

Now all these declensions, all these decays that are found in some professors, they all proceed from this root and cause, they are all the product of indwelling sin, and all evince the exceeding power and efficacy of it. For the proof whereof I shall not need to go farther than the general rule which out of James we have already considered; namely, that lust or indwelling sin, is the cause of all actual sin, and all habitual declensions in believers. This is that which the apostle intends in that place to teach and declare. I shall therefore handle these two things, and shew, [1.] That this doth evince a great efficacy and power in sin. [2.] Declare the ways and means whereby it brings forth, or brings about this cursed effect; all in design of our general end, in calling upon and cautioning believers to avoid it, to oppose it.

[1.] It appears to be a work of great power and efficacy, from the provision that is made against it, which it prevails over. There is in the covenant of grace plentiful provision made, not only for the preventing of declensions and decays in believers, but also for their continual carrying on towards perfection. As,

1st. The word itself, and all the ordinances of the gospel, are appointed and given unto us for this end, Ephes. iv. 11—15. That which is the end of giving gospel officers to the church, is the end also of giving all the ordinances to be administered by them. For they are given for the work of the ministry, that is, for the administration of the ordinances of the gospel. Now what is, or what are, these ends? They are all for the preventing of decays and declensions in the saints, all for the carrying them on to perfection; so it is said, ver. 12. In general it is for the perfecting of the saints, carrying on the work of grace in them, and the work of holiness and obedience by them; or for the edifying of the body of Christ, their building up in an increase of faith and love, even of every true member of the mystical body. But how far are they appointed thus to carry them on, thus to build them up? Hath it bounds fixed to its work? doth it carry them so far, and then leave them? No, saith the apostle,

ver. 13. the dispensation of the word of the gospel, and the ordinances thereof, is designed for our help, assistance, and furtherance, until the whole work of faith and obedience is consummate. It is appointed to perfect and complete that faith, knowledge, and growth in grace and holiness, which is allotted unto us in this world. But what and if oppositions and temptations do lie in the way, Satan and his instruments working with great subtlety and deceit? Why, ver. 14. these ordinances are designed for our safe-guarding and deliverance from all their attempts and assaults, that so being preserved in the use of them, or 'speaking the truth in love, we may grow up unto him in all things who is the head, even Christ Jesus.' This is in general the use of all gospel ordinances, the chief and main end for which they were given and appointed of God; namely, to preserve believers from all decays of faith and obedience, and to carry them on still towards perfection. These are means which God, the good husbandman makes use of, to cause the vine to thrive and bring forth fruit. And I could also manifest the same to be the especial end of them distinctly. Briefly, the word is milk and strong meat, for the nourishing and strengthening of all sorts, and all degrees of believers. It hath both seed and water in it, and manuring with it, to make them fruitful. The ordinance of the supper is appointed on purpose for the strengthening of our faith in the remembrance of the death of the Lord, and the exercise of love one towards another. The communion of saints is for the edifying each other in faith, love, and obedience.

2dly, There is that which adds weight to this consideration. God suffers us not to be unmindful of this assistance he hath afforded us, but is continually calling upon us to make use of the means appointed for the attaining of the end proposed. He shews them unto us, as the angel shewed the water-spring to Agar. Commands, exhortations, promises, threatenings, are multiplied to this purpose; see them summed up, Heb. ii. 1. He is continually saying to us, Why will you die? why will you wither and decay? Come to the pastures provided for you, and your souls shall live. If we see a lamb run from the fold into the wilderness, we wonder not if it be torn and rent of wild beasts: if we see a sheep leaving its green pastures and water-courses, to abide

in dry barren heaths, we count it no marvel, nor inquire farther, if we see him lean and ready to perish. But if we find lambs wounded in the fold, we wonder at the boldness and rage of the beasts of prey, that durst set upon them there. If we see sheep pining in full pastures, we judge them to be diseased and unsound. It is indeed no marvel that poor creatures, who forsake their own mercies, and run away from the pasture and fold of Christ in his ordinances, are rent and torn with divers lusts, and do pine away with hunger and famine. But to see men living under, and enjoying, all the means of spiritual thriving, yet to decay, not to be fat and flourishing, but rather daily to pine and wither, this argues some secret powerful distemper, whose poisonous and noxious qualities hinder the virtue and efficacy of the means they enjoy. This is indwelling sin. So wonderfully powerful, so effectually poisonous it is, that it can bring leanness on the souls of men in the midst of all precious means of growth and flourishing. It may well make us tremble to see men living under, and in, the use of the means of the gospel, preaching, praying, administration of sacraments, and yet grow colder every day than other in zeal for God, more selfish and worldly, even habitually to decline as to the degrees of holiness which they had attained unto.

3dly, Together with the dispensation of the outward means of spiritual growth or improvement, there are also supplies of grace continually afforded the saints from their head, Christ. He is the head of all the saints. And he is a living head, and so a living head, as that he tells us, that 'because he liveth, we shall live also;' John xiv 12. He communicates of spiritual life to all that are is. In him is the fountain of our life, which is therefore said to be 'hid with him in God;' Col. iii. 3. And this life he gives unto his saints, by quickening of them by his Spirit;' Rom. ix. 11. And he continues it unto them, by the supplies of living grace which he communicates unto them. From these two, his quickening of us, and continually giving out supplies of life unto us, he is said to live in us, Gal. ii. 20. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' The spiritual life which I have is not mine own, not from myself was it educed, not by myself is it maintained, but it is merely and solely the work of Christ; so that it is not I that live, but he lives

in me, the whole of my life being from him alone. Neither doth this living head communicate only a bare life unto believers, that they should merely live and no more, a poor, weak, dying life, as it were, but he gives out sufficiently to afford them a strong, vigorous, thriving, flourishing life; John x. 10. He comes not only that his sheep may have life, but that 'they may have it more abundantly;' that is, in a plentiful manner, so as that they may flourish, be fat and fruitful. Thus is it with the whole body of Christ, and every member thereof. Ephes. iv. 15, 16. 'Whereby it grows up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.' The end of all communications of grace, and supplies of life from this living and blessed head, is the increase of the whole body, and every member of it, and the edifying of itself in love. His treasures of grace are unsearchable, his stores inexhaustible. His life, the fountain of ours, full and eternal; his heart bounteous and large, his hand open and liberal; so that there is no doubt but that he communicates supplies of grace for their increase in holiness abundantly unto all his saints. Whence then is it that they do not all flourish and thrive accordingly? As you may see it oftentimes in a natural body, so is it here. Though the seat and rise of the blood and spirits in head and heart be excellently good and sound, yet there may be a withering member in the body; somewhat intercepts the influences of life unto it. So that though the heart and head do perform their office, in giving of supplies no less to that, than they do to any other member, yet all the effect produced, is merely to keep it from utter perishing; it grows weak and decays every day. The withering and decaying of any member in Christ's mystical body, is not for the want of his communication of grace for an abundant life, but from the powerful interception that is made of the efficacy of it, by the interposition and opposition of indwelling sin. Hence it is that where lust grows strong, a great deal of grace will but keep the soul alive, and not give it any eminency in fruitfulness at all. Oftentimes Christ gives very much grace, where not many of its effects do ap-

pear. It spends its strength and power in withstanding the continual assaults of violent corruptions and lusts, so that it cannot put forth its proper virtue towards farther fruitfulness. As a virtuous medicine, that is fit both to check vicious and noxious humours, and to comfort, refresh, and strengthen nature; if the evil humour be strong and greatly prevailing, spends its whole strength and virtue in the subduing and correcting of it, contributing much less to the relief of nature than otherwise it would do, if it met not with such oppositions; so is it with the eye-salve, and the healing grace which we have abundantly from the wings of the Sun of righteousness. It is forced oftentimes to put forth its virtue to oppose and contend against, and in any measure subdue, prevailing lusts and corruptions: that the soul receiveth not that strengthening unto duties and fruitfulness which otherwise it might receive by it, is from hence. How sound, healthy, and flourishing, how fruitful and exemplary in holiness, might many a soul be, by and with that grace which is continually communicated to it from Christ, which now, by reason of the power of indwelling sin, is only not dead, but weak, withering, and useless. And this, if any thing, is a notable evidence of the efficacy of indwelling sin, that it is able to give such a stop and check to the mighty and effectual power of grace, so that notwithstanding the blessed and continual supplies that we receive from our head, yet many believers do decline and decay, and that habitually, as to what they had attained unto; their last ways not answering their first. This makes the vineyard in the very fruitful hill to bring forth so many wild grapes. This makes so many trees barren in fertile fields.

4thly, besides the continual supplies of grace that constantly, according to the tenure of the covenant, are communicated unto believers, which keeps them that they thirst no more as to a total indigence, there is moreover a readiness in the Lord Christ to yield peculiar succour to the souls of his, according as their occasions shall require. The apostle tells us, that he is 'a merciful High Priest,' and 'able' (that is, ready prepared and willing) 'to succour them that are tempted;' Heb. ii. 18. And we are on that account invited to come 'with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;'

that is, grace sufficient, seasonable, suitable unto any especial trial or temptation that we may be exercised withal. Our merciful High Priest is ready to give out this especial seasonable grace, over and above those constant communications of supplies of the spirit, which we mentioned before. Besides the never-failing springs of ordinary covenant grace, he hath also peculiar refreshing showers for times of drought. And this is exceedingly to the advantage of the saints, for their preservation and growth in grace; and there may very many more of the like nature be added. But now, I say, notwithstanding all these, and the residue of the like importance, such is the power and efficacy of indwelling sin, so great its deceitfulness and restlessness, so many its wiles and temptations, it often falls out that many of them for whose growth and improvement all this provision is made, do yet, as was shewed, go back and decline, even as to their course of walking with God. Sampson's strength fully evidenced itself when he brake seven new withs, and seven new cords, wherewith he was bound, as burning tow and as thread. The noxious humour in the body which is so stubborn, as that no use of the most sovereign remedies can prevail against it, ought to be regarded. Such is this indwelling sin if not watched over. It breaks all the cords made to bind it; it blunts the instruments appointed to root it up; it resists all healing medicines, though never so sovereign, and is therefore assuredly of exceeding efficacy. Besides, believers have innumerable obligations upon them from the love, the command of God, to grow in grace, to press forward towards perfection, as they have abundant means provided for them so to do. Their doing so is a matter of the greatest advantage, profit, sweetness, contentment unto them in the world. It is the burden, the trouble of their souls, that they do not so do, that they are not more holy, more zealous, useful, fruitful; they desire it above life itself; they know it is their duty to watch against this enemy, to fight against it, to pray against it, and so they do. They more desire his destruction than the enjoyment of all this world, and all that it can afford. And yet, notwithstanding all this, such is the subtlety, and fraud, and violence, and fury, and urgency, and importunity of this adversary, that it frequently prevails, to bring them into the

woful condition mentioned. Hence it is with believers sometimes as it is with men in some places at sea. They have a good and fair gale of wind, it may be, all night long; they ply their tackling, attend diligently their business, and it may be take great contentment to consider how they proceed in their voyage. In the morning, or after a season, coming to measure what way they have made, and what progress they have had, they find that they are much backward of what they were, instead of getting one step forward; falling into a swift tide or current against them, it hath frustrated all their labours, and rendered the wind in their sails almost useless; somewhat thereby they have borne up against the stream, but have made no progress. So is it with believers; they have a good gale of supplies of the Spirit from above, they attend duties diligently, pray constantly, hear attentively, and omit nothing that may carry them in their voyage towards eternity. But after awhile, coming seriously to consider by the examination of their hearts and ways, what progress they have made, they find that all their assistance and duties have not been able to bear them up against some strong tide or current of indwelling sin. It hath kept them indeed that they have not been driven and split on rocks and shelves; it hath preserved them from gross, scandalous sins; but yet they have lost in their spiritual frame, or gone backwards, and are entangled under many woful decays; which is a notable evidence of the life of sin, about which we are treating. Now because the end of our discovering this power of sin, is, that we may be careful to obviate and prevent it in its operation, and because of all the effects that it produceth there is none more dangerous or pernicious than that we have last insisted on, namely, that it prevails upon many professors unto an habitual declension from their former ways and attainments, notwithstanding all the sweetness and excellency which their souls have found in them, I shall, as was said, in the next place consider by what ways and means, and through what assistance it usually prevails in this kind, that we may the better be instructed to watch against it.

CHAP. XV.

Decays in degrees of grace caused by indwelling sin. The ways of its prevalency to this purpose.

THE ways and means whereby indwelling sin prevaileth on believers unto habitual declensions and decays as to degrees of grace and holiness, is that now which comes under consideration, and are many.

1. Upon the first conversion and calling of sinners unto God and Christ, they have usually many fresh springs breaking forth in their souls, and refreshing showers coming upon them, which bear them up to a high rate of faith, love, holiness, fruitfulness, and obedience. As upon a land-flood when many lesser streams run into a river, it swells over its bounds, and rolls on with a more than ordinary fulness. Now if these springs be not kept open, if they prevail not for the continuance of these showers, they must needs decay and go backwards. We shall name one or two of them.

(1.) They have a fresh vigorous sense of pardoning mercy. According as this is in the soul, so will its love and delight in God, so will its obedience, be. As, I say, is the sense of gospel-pardon, so will be the life of gospel-love. Luke vii. 47. 'I say unto thee,' saith our Saviour of the poor woman, 'her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' Her great love was an evidence of great forgiveness, and her great sense of it. For our Saviour is not rendering a reason of her forgiveness, as though it were for her love, but of her love, that it was because of her forgiveness. Having in the foregoing parable, from ver. 38. and onwards, convinced the Pharisees with whom he had to do, that he to whom most was forgiven would love most, as ver. 43. he thence gives an account of the great love of the woman springing from the sense she had of the great forgiveness which she had so freely received. Thus sinners, at their first conversion, are very sensible of great forgiveness. 'Of whom I am chief,' lies next their heart. This greatly subdues their hearts and spirits unto all in God, and

quickens them unto all obedience; even that such poor cursed sinners as they were, should so freely be delivered and pardoned. The love of God and of Christ in their forgiveness, highly conquers and constrains them to make it their business to live unto God.

(2.) The fresh taste they have had of spiritual things, keeps up such a savour and relish of them in their souls, as that worldly contentments whereby men are drawn off from close walking with God, are rendered sapless and undesirable unto them. Having tasted of the wine of the gospel they desire no other, for they say, this is best. So was it with the apostles, upon that option offered them as to a departure from Christ, upon the apostacy of many false professors: 'Will ye go away also?' John vi. 67. They answer by Peter, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life;' ver. 68. They had such a fresh savour and relish of the doctrine of the gospel, and the grace of Christ upon their souls, that they can entertain no thoughts of declining from it. As a man that hath been long kept in a dungeon, if brought forth on a sudden into the light of the sun, finds so much pleasure and contentment in it, in the beauties of the old creation, that he thinks he can never be weary of it, nor shall ever be contented on any account to be under darkness again. So is it with souls when first translated into the marvellous light of Christ, to behold the beauties of the new creation. They see a new glory in him, that hath quite sullied the desirableness of all earthly diversions. And they see a new guilt and filth in sin, that gives them an utter abhorrency of its old delights and pleasures; and so of other things.

Now whilst these and the like springs are kept open in the souls of converted sinners, they constrain them to a vigorous active holiness. They can never do enough for God; so that oftentimes their zeal as saints suffers them not to escape without some blots on their prudence as men, as might be instanced in many of the martyrs of old.

This then is the first, at least one, way whereby indwelling sin prepares men for decays and declensions in grace and obedience. It endeavours to stop or taint these springs. And there are several ways whereby it brings this to pass.

[1.] It works by sloth and negligence. It prevails in

the soul to a neglect of stirring up continual thoughts of, or about, the things that so powerfully influence it unto strict and fruitful obedience. If care be not taken, if diligence and watchfulness be not used, and all means that are appointed of God, to keep a quick and living sense of them upon the soul, they will dry up and decay, and consequently, that obedience that should spring from them, will do so also. Isaac digged wells, but the Philistines stopped them, and his flocks had no benefit by them. Let the heart never so little disuse itself to gracious soul-affecting thoughts of the love of God, the cross of Christ, the greatness and excellency of gospel mercy, the beauties of holiness, they will quickly be as much estranged to a man as he can be to them. He that shuts his eyes for a season in the sun, when he opens them again can see nothing at all. And so much as a man loseth of faith towards these things, so much will they lose of power towards him. They can do little or nothing upon him, because of his unbelief, which formerly were so exceedingly effectual towards him. So was it with the spouse in the Canticles, chap. v. 2. Christ calls unto her, ver. 1. with a marvellous loving and gracious invitation unto communion with himself. She who had formerly been ravished at the first hearing of that joyful sound, being now under the power of sloth and carnal ease, returns a sorry excusing answer to his call, which ended in her own signal loss and sorrow. Indwelling sin, I say, prevailing by spiritual sloth upon the souls of men unto an inadvertency of the motions of God's Spirit in their former apprehensions of divine love, and a negligence of stirring up continual thoughts of faith about it, a decay grows insensibly upon the whole soul. Thus God oft complains that his people had forgotten him, that is, grew unmindful of his love and grace, which was the beginning of their apostacy.

[2.] By unframing the soul, so that it shall have formal, weary, powerless thoughts of those things which should prevail with it unto diligence in thankful obedience. The apostle cautions us, that in dealing with God we should use reverence and godly fear, because of his purity, holiness, and majesty, Heb. xii. 28, 29. And this is that which the Lord himself spake in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me;' Levit. x. 3. He will be dealt withal in an awful, holy, reverend manner.

So are we to deal with all the things of God, wherein, or whereby, we have communion with him. The soul is to have a great reverence of God in them. When men begin to take them into slight or common thoughts, not using and improving them unto the utmost for the ends whereunto they are appointed, they lose all their beauty, and glory, and power towards them. When we have any thing to do wherein faith or love towards God is to be exercised, we must do it with all our hearts, with all our minds, strength, and souls, not slightly and perfunctorily, which God abhors; he doth not only require that we bear his love and grace in remembrance, but that, as much as in us lieth, we do it according to the worth and excellency of them. It was the sin of Hezekiah, that he 'rendered not again according to the benefits done to him,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. So whilst we consider gospel truths, the uttermost endeavour of the soul ought to be, that we may be changed into the same image or likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18. that is, that they may have their full power and effect upon us. Otherwise James tells us what our 'beholding the glory of the Lord in a glass,' there mentioned by the apostle, that is, reading or hearing the mind of God in Christ revealed in the gospel, comes unto, chap. i. 23,24. 'It is but like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.' It makes no impression upon him, begets no idea nor image of his likeness in his imagination, because he doth it only slightly, and with a transient look. So is it with men that will indeed think of gospel truths, but in a slight manner, without endeavouring with all their hearts, minds, and strength, to have them ingrafted upon their souls, and all the effects of them produced in them. Now this is the way of sinners in their first engagements unto God. They never think of pardoning mercy, but they labour to affect their whole souls with it, and do stir up themselves unto suitable affections and returns of constant obedience. They think not of the excellency of Christ, and spiritual things, now newly discovered unto them in a saving light, but they press with all their might after a farther, a fuller enjoyment of them. This keeps them humble and holy, this makes them thankful and fruitful. But now, if the utmost diligence and carefulness be not used to improve

and grow in this wisdom, to keep up this frame, indwelling sin, working by the vanity of the minds of men, will insensibly bring them to content themselves with slight and rare thoughts of these things, without a diligent sedulous endeavour to give them their due improvement upon the soul. As men decay herein, so will they assuredly decay and decline in the power of holiness and close walking with God. The springs being stopped or tainted, the streams will not run so swiftly, at least not so sweetly, as formerly. Some by this means, under an uninterrupted profession, insensibly wither almost into nothing. They talk of religion and spiritual things as much as ever they did in their lives, and perform duties with as much constancy as ever they did, but yet they have poor, lean, starving souls, as to any real and effectual communion with God. By the power and subtlety of indwelling sin they have grown formal, and learned to deal about spiritual things in an overly manner, whereby they have lost all their life, vigour, savour, and efficacy towards them. Be always serious in spiritual things, if ever you intend to be bettered by them.

[3.] Indwelling sin oftentimes prevails to the stopping of these springs of gospel obedience, by false and foolish opinions, corrupting the simplicity of the gospel. False opinions are the work of the flesh. From the vanity and darkness of the minds of men, with a mixture more or less of corrupt affections, do they mostly proceed. The apostle was jealous over his Corinthians in this matter; he was afraid lest their minds should 'by any means be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,' 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. which he knew would be attended by a decay and declension in faith, love, and obedience. And thus matters in this case often fall out. We have seen some, who after they have received a sweet taste of the love of God in Christ, of the excellency of pardoning mercy, and have walked humbly with God for many years in the faith and apprehension of the truth, have by the corruption of their minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, by false and foolish opinions, despised all their own experiences, and rejected all the efficacy of truth, as to the furtherance of their obedience. Hence John cautions the elect lady and her children to take heed they were not seduced, 'lest they should lose the things that they had wrought,'

2 Epist. ver. 8. lest they should themselves cast away all their former obedience as lost, and a thing of no value. We have innumerable instances hereof in the days wherein we live. How many are there, who not many years since put an unspeakable value on the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, who delighted in gospel discoveries of spiritual things, and walked in obedience to God on the account of them, who being beguiled and turned aside from the truth as it is in Jesus, do despise these springs of their own former obedience. And as this is done grossly and openly in some, so there are more secret and more plausible insinuations of corrupt opinions, tainting the springs and fountains of gospel obedience, and through the vanity of men's minds, which is a principal part of indwelling sin, getting ground upon them. Such are all those that tend to the extenuation of special grace in its freedom and efficacy, and the advancement of the wills or the endeavours of men in their spiritual power and ability: they are works of the flesh, and howsoever some may pretend a usefulness in them to the promotion of holiness, they will be found to taint the springs of true evangelical obedience, insensibly to turn the heart from God, and to bring the whole soul into a spiritual decay.

And this is one way whereby indwelling sin produceth this pernicious effect, of drawing men off from the power, purity, and fruitfulness attending their first conversion and engagements unto God, bringing them into habitual declension, at least as unto degrees, of their holiness and grace. There is not any thing we ought to be more watchful against, if we intend effectually to deal with this powerful and subtle enemy. It is no small part of the wisdom of faith, to observe whether gospel truths continue to have the same savour unto, and efficacy upon, the soul, as formerly they have had; and whether an endeavour be maintained to improve them continually as at the first. A commandment that is always practised is always new, as John speaks of that of love. And he that really improves gospel truths, though he hears them a thousand times, they will be always new and fresh unto him, because they put him on newness of practice. When to another that grows common under them, they are burdensome and common unto him, and he even loaths the manna that he is so accustomed unto.

2. Indwelling sin doth this, by taking men off from their watch against the returns of Satan. When our Lord Christ comes first to take possession of any soul for himself, he binds that strong man and spoils his goods; he deprives him of all his power, dominion, and interest. Satan being thus dispossessed and frustrated in his hopes and expectations, leaves the soul, as finding it newly mortified to his baits. So he left our Saviour upon his first fruitless attempts. But it is said, 'He left him only for a season,' Luke iv. 13. He intended to return again, as he should see his advantage. So is it with believers also. Being cast out from his interest in them, he leaves them for a season, at least comparatively he doth so. Freed from his assaults and perplexing temptations, they proceed vigorously in the course of their obedience, and so flourish in the ways of God. But this holds not; Satan returns again, and if the soul stands not continually upon his guard against him, he will quickly get such advantages, as shall put a notable interruption upon his fruitfulness and obedience. Hence some, after they have spent some time, it may be some years, in cheerful exemplary walking with God, have upon Satan's return, consumed all their latter days in wrestling with perplexing temptations, wherewith he hath entangled them. Others have plainly fallen under the power of his assaults. It is like a man, who having for awhile lived usefully amongst his neighbours, done good and communicated according to his ability, distributing to the poor, and helping all around about him, at length falling into the hands of vexatious, wrangling, oppressive men, he is forced to spend his whole time and revenue in defending himself against them at law, and so becomes useless in the place where he lives. So is it with many a believer; after he hath walked in a fruitful course of obedience to the glory of God, and edification of the church of Christ, being afresh set upon by the return of Satan in one way or other, he hath enough to do all the remainder of his life to keep himself alive; in the mean time, as to many graces, wofully decaying and going backward. Now this also, though Satan hath a hand in it, is from indwelling sin; I mean, the success is so which Satan doth obtain in his undertaking. This encourageth him, maketh way for his return, and gives entrance

to his temptations. You know how it is with them, out of whom he is cast only by gospel conviction; after he hath wandered and waited awhile, he saith, he will return to his house from whence he was ejected. And what is the issue? Carnal lusts have prevailed over the man's convictions, and made his soul fit to entertain returning devils. It is so as to the measure of prevalency, that Satan obtains against believers, upon advantages administered unto him, by sin's disposing the soul unto an obnoxiousness to his temptations.

Now the way and means whereby indwelling sin doth give advantage to Satan for his return, are all those which dispose them toward a declension which shall afterward be mentioned. Satan is a diligent, watchful, and crafty adversary; he will neglect no opportunity, no advantage that is is offered unto him. Wherein then soever our spiritual strength is impaired by sin, or which way soever our lusts press, Satan falls in with that weakness, and presseth towards that ruin. So that all the actings of the law of sin are subservient to this end of Satan. I shall therefore only at present mention one or two, that seem principally to invite Satan to attempt a return.

(1.) It entangleth the soul in the things of the world, all which are so many purveyors for Satan. When Pharaoh had let the people go, he heard after awhile that they were entangled in the wilderness, and supposeth that he shall therefore now overtake them and destroy them. This stirs him up to pursue after them. Satan finding those whom he hath been cast out from, entangled in the things of the world, by which he is sure to find an easy access unto them, is encouraged to attempt upon them afresh; as the spider to come down upon the strongest fly that is entangled in his web. For he comes by his temptations only to impel them unto that whereunto by their own lusts they are inclined, by adding poison to their lusts, and painting to the objects of them. And oftentimes by this advantage he gets so in upon the souls of men, that they are never well free of him more whilst they live. And as men's diversions increase from the world, so do their entanglements from Satan. When they have more to do in the world than they can well manage, they shall have more to do from Satan than

they can well withstand. When men are made spiritually faint, by dealing in and with the world, Satan sets on them as Amalek did on the faint and weak of the people that came out of Egypt.

(2.) It produceth this effect by making the soul negligent, and taking it off from its watch. We have before shewed at large that it is one main part of the effectual deceitfulness of indwelling sin, to make the soul inadvertent, to turn it off from the diligent watchful attendance unto its duty, which is required. Now there is not any thing in reference whereunto diligence and watchfulness is more strictly enjoined, than the returning assaults of Satan, 1 Pet. v. 8. 'Be sober, be vigilant;' and why so? 'because of your adversary the devil.' Unless you are exceeding watchful, at one time or other he will surprise you. And all the injunctions of our blessed Saviour, to watch, are still with reference unto him and his temptations. Now when the soul is made careless and inadvertent, forgetting what an enemy it hath to deal withal, or is lifted up with the successes it hath newly obtained against him, then is Satan's time to attempt a re-entrance of his old habitation, which if he cannot obtain, yet he makes their lives uncomfortable to themselves, and unfruitful to others, in weakening their root, and withering their fruit through his poisonous temptations. He comes down upon our duties of obedience, as the fowls upon Abraham's sacrifice, that if we watch not, as he did, to drive them away (for by resistance he is overcome and put to flight), he will devour them.

(3.) Indwelling sin takes advantage to put forth its efficacy and deceit, to withdraw men from their primitive zeal and holiness, from their first faith, love, and works, by the evil examples of professors amongst whom they live. When men first engage into the ways of God, they have a reverent esteem of those whom they believe to have been made partakers of that mercy before themselves; these they love and honour, as it is their duty. But after awhile, they find many of them walking in many things unevenly, crookedly, and not unlike the men of the world. Here sin is not wanting to its advantage. Insensibly it prevails with men to a compliance with them. This way, this course of walking, doth well enough with others, why may it not do

so with us also? Such is the inward thought of many, that works effectually in them. And so, through the craft of sin, the generation of professors corrupt one another. As a stream arising from a clear spring or a fountain, whilst it runs in its own peculiar channel, and keeps its water unmixed, preserves its purity and cleanness, but when it falls in its course with other streams that are turbid and foul, though running the same way with it, it becomes muddy and discoloured also. So is it in this case. Believers come forth from the spring of the new birth with some purity and cleanness, this for awhile they keep in the course of their private walking with God; but now when they come sometimes to fall into society with others, whose profession flows and runs the same way with theirs, even towards heaven, but yet are muddied and sullied with sin and the world, they are often corrupted with them, and by them, and so decline from their first purity, faith, and holiness. Now lest this may have been the case of any who shall read this discourse, I shall add some few cautions that are necessary to preserve men from this infection.

[1.] In the body of professors there is a great number of hypocrites. Though we cannot say of this or that man that he is so, yet that some there are is most certain. Our Saviour hath told us that it will be so to the end of the world. All that have oil in their lamps, have it not in their vessels. Let men take heed how they give themselves up unto a conformity to the professors they meet withal, lest instead of saints and the best of men, they sometimes propose for their example hypocrites, which are the worst; and when they think they are like unto them who bear the image of God, they conform themselves unto those who bear the image of Satan.

[2.] You know not what may be the present temptation of those whose ways you observe. It may be they are under some peculiar desertion from God, and so are withering for a season, until he send them some refreshing showers from above. It may be they are entangled with some special corruptions, which is their burden, that you know not of; and for any voluntarily to fall into such a frame, as others are cast into by the power of their temptations, or to think that will suffice in them, which they see to suffice in

others whose distempers they know not, is folly and presumption. He that knows such or such a person to be a living man, and of a healthy constitution, if he see him go crawling up and down about his affairs, feeble and weak, sometimes falling, sometimes standing, and making small progress in any thing, will he think it sufficient for himself to do so also? will he not inquire whether the person he sees, have not lately fallen into some distemper or sickness, that hath weakened him, and brought him into that condition? Assuredly he will so do. Take heed, Christians, many of the professors with whom ye do converse are sick, and wounded; the wounds of some of them do stink, and are corrupt because of their folly. If you have any spiritual health, do not think their weak and uneven walking will be accepted at your hands; much less think it will be well for you to become sick and to be wounded also.

[3.] Remember that of many of the best Christians, the worst only is known and seen. Many who keep up precious communion with God, do yet oftentimes, by their natural tempers of freedom or passion, not carry so glorious appearances as others, who perhaps come short of them in grace and the power of godliness. In respect of their outward conversation it may seem they are scarcely saved, when in respect of their faith and love they may be eminent. They may, as the king's daughter, be all glorious within, though their clothes be not always of wrought gold. Take heed then that you be not infected with their worst, when ye are not able it may be to imitate them in their best; but to return.

(4.) Sin doth this work by cherishing some secret particular lust in the heart. This the soul contends against faintly. It contends against it upon the account of sincerity, it cannot but do so; but it doth not make thorough work, vigorously to mortify it by the strength and power of grace. Now where it is thus with a soul, an habitual declension as to holiness will assuredly ensue. David shews us how in his first days he kept his heart close unto God; Psal. xviii. 23. 'I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.' His great care was lest any one lust should prevail in him, or upon him, that might be called his iniquity in a peculiar manner. The same course steered Paul also;

1 Cor. ix. 27. he was in danger to be lifted up by his spiritual revelations and enjoyments. This makes him keep his body in subjection, that no carnal reasonings or vain imagination might take place in him. But where indwelling sin hath provoked, irritated, and given strength unto a special lust, it proves assuredly a principal means of a general declension. For as an infirmity and weakness in any one vital part will make the whole body consumptive, so will the weakness in any one grace, which a perplexing lust brings with it, make the soul. It every way weakens spiritual strength. It weakens confidence in God in faith and prayer. The knees will be feeble, and the hands will hang down in dealing with God, where a galling and unmortified lust lies in the heart. it will take 'such hold upon the soul, that it shall not be able to look up;' Psal. xl. 12. It darkens the mind by innumerable foolish imaginations, which it stirs up to make provision for itself. It galls the conscience with those spots and stains, which in and by its actings it brings upon the soul. It contends in the will for rule and dominion. An active stirring corruption would have the commanding power in the soul, and it is ever and anon ready to take the throne. It disturbs the thoughts, and sometimes will even frighten the soul from dealing with it by meditation, lest corrupt affections being entangled by it, grace loses ground instead of prevailing. It breaks out oftentimes into scandalous sins, as it did in David and Hezekiah, and loads the sinner with sorrow and discouragement. By these and the like means, it becomes to the soul like a moth in a garment, to eat up and devour the strongest threads of it, so that though the whole hang loose together, it is easily torn to pieces. Though the soul with whom it is thus do for a season keep up a fair profession, yet his strength is secretly devoured; and every temptation tears and rents his conscience at pleasure. It becomes with such men as it is with some who have for a many years been of a sound, strong, athletic constitution. Some secret, hectical distemper seizeth on them: for a season they take no notice of it; or if they do, they think they shall do well enough with it, and easily shake it off when they have a little leisure to attend unto it; but for the present they think as Samson with his locks cut, they will do as at other times. Sometimes it may be they complain that they

are not well, they know not what aileth them, and it may be rise violently in an opposition to their distemper; but after a while struggling in vain, the vigour of their spirits and strength failing them, they are forced to yield to the power of a consumption. And now all they can do is little enough to keep them alive. It is so with men brought into spiritual decay by any secret perplexing corruption. It may be they have had a vigorous principle of obedience and holiness. Indwelling sin watching its opportunities, by some temptation or other, hath kindled and inflamed some particular lust in them. For awhile it may be they take little notice of it. Sometimes they complain, but think they will do as in former times, until being insensibly weakened in their spiritual strength, they have work enough to do in keeping alive what remains and is ready to die; Hos. v. 13. I shall not add any thing here as to the prevention and obviating this advantage of indwelling sin, having elsewhere treated of it peculiarly and apart.

(5.) It works by negligence of private communion with God in prayer and meditation. I have shewed before how indwelling sin puts forth its deceitfulness in diverting the soul from watchfulness in and unto these duties. Here if it prevails, it will not fail to produce an habitual declension in the whole course of obedience. All neglect of private duties is principled by a weariness of God as he complaineth, Isa. xlii. 22. 'Thou hast not called upon me, thou hast been weary of me.' Neglect of invocation proceeds from weariness; and where there is weariness, there will be withdrawing from that whereof we are weary. Now God alone being the fountain and spring of spiritual life, if there be a weariness of him, and withdrawing from him, it is impossible but that there will a decay in the life ensue. Indeed what men are in these duties, I mean as to faith and love in them, that they are and no more. Here lies the root of their obedience, and if this fail, all fruit will quickly fail. You may sometimes see a tree flourishing with leaves and fruit goodly and pleasant. After awhile the leaves begin to decay, the fruit to wither, the whole to droop. Search, and you shall find the root, whereby it should draw in moisture and fatness from the earth to supply the body and branches with sap and juice for growth and fruit, hath received a wound, is some

way perished, and doth not perform its duty, so that though the branches are flourishing awhile with what they had received, their sustenance being intercepted they must decay. So it is here. These duties of private communion with God, are the means of receiving supplies of spiritual strength from him; of sap and fatness from Christ the vine and olive. Whilst they do so, the conversation and course of obedience flourisheth and is fruitful, all outward duties are cheerfully and regularly performed. But if there be a wound, a defect, a failing, in that which should first take in the spiritual radical moisture, that should be communicated unto the whole, the rest may for a season maintain their station and appearance, but after awhile profession will wither, fruits will decay, and the whole be ready to die. Hence our Saviour lets us know, Matt. vi. 6. what a man is in secret, in these private duties, that he is in the eyes of God, and no more. And one reason amongst others is, because they have a more vigorous acting of unmixed grace than any other duties whatever. In all or most particular duties, besides the influence that they may have from carnal respects, which are many, and the ways of their insinuation subtle and imperceptible, there is an alloy of gifts, which sometimes even devours the pure gold of grace, which should be the chief and principal in them. In these, there is immediate intercourse between God and that which is of himself in the soul. If once sin, by its deceits and treacheries, prevail to take off the soul from diligent attendance unto communion with God, and constancy in these duties, it will not fail to effect a declining in the whole of a man's obedience. It hath made its entrance, and will assuredly make good its progress.

(6.) Growing in notions of truth without answerable practice, is another thing that indwelling sin makes use of to bring the souls of believers unto a decay. The apostle tell us, that 'knowledge puffeth up;' 1 Cor. viii. 1. If it be alone, not improved in practice, it swells men beyond a due proportion. Like a man that hath a dropsy, we are not to expect that he hath strength to his bigness. Like trees that are continually running up a head, which keeps them from bearing fruit. When once men have attained to this, that they can entertain and receive evangelical truths in a new and more glorious light, or more clear discovery than for-

merly, or new manifestations of truth which they knew not before, and please themselves in so doing, without diligent endeavours to have the power of those truths and notions upon their hearts, and their souls made conformable unto them, they generally learn so to dispose of all truths formerly known, which were sometimes inlaid in their hearts with more efficacy and power. This hath proved, if not the ruin, yet the great impairing of many in these days of light wherein we live. By this means, from humble close walking, many have withered into an empty, barren, talking profession. All things almost have in a short season become alike unto them: have they been true or false, so they might be debating of them, and disputing about them, all is well. This is food for sin; it hatcheth, increaseth it, and is increased by it. A notable way it is for the vanity that is in the mind, to exert itself without a rebuke from conscience. Whilst men are talking, and writing, and studying about religion, and hearing preaching, it may be, with great delight, as those in Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 32. conscience, unless thoroughly awake and circumspect, and furnished with spiritual wisdom and care, will be very well pacified, and enter no rebukes or pleas against the way that the soul is in. But yet all this may be nothing but the acting of that natural vanity which lies in the mind, and is a principal part of the sin we treat of. And generally this is so, when men content themselves, as was said, with the notions of truth, without labouring after an experience of the power of them in their hearts, and the bringing forth the fruit of them in their lives, on which a decay must needs ensue.

(7.) Growth in carnal wisdom is another help to sin in producing this sad effect. 'Thy wisdom and thy knowledge,' saith the prophet, 'hath perverted thee;' Isa. xlvii. 10. So much as carnal wisdom increaseth, so much faith decays. The proper work of it is to teach a man to trust to and in himself, of faith to trust wholly in another. So it labours to destroy the whole work of faith, by causing the soul to return into a deceiving fulness of his own. We have woful examples of the prevalency of this principle of declension in the days wherein we live. How many a poor, humble, broken-hearted creature, who followed after God in simplicity and integrity of spirit, have we seen, through the observation of the ways and walkings of others, and closing

with the temptations to craft and subtlety, which opportunities in the world have administered unto them, come to be dipped in a worldly carnal frame, and utterly to wither in their possession. Many are so sullied hereby, that they are not known to be the men they were.

(8.) Some great sin lying long in the heart and conscience unrepented of, or not repented of as it ought, and as the matter requires, furthers indwelling sin in this work. The great turn of the life of David, whence his first ways carried the reputation, was in the harbouring his great sin in his conscience without suitable repentance. It was otherwise we know with Peter, and he had another issue. A great sin will certainly give a great turn to the life of a professor. If it be well cured in the blood of Christ, with that humiliation which the gospel requires, it often proves a means of more watchfulness, fruitfulness, humility, and contentation, than ever before the soul obtained. If it be neglected, it certainly hardens the heart, weakens spiritual strength, enfeebles the soul, discouraging it unto all communion with God, and is a notable principle of a general decay. So David complains, Psal. xxxiii. 5. 'My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.' His present distemper was not so much from his sin, as his folly, not so much from the wounds he had received, as from his neglect to make a timely application for their cure. It is like a broken bone, which, being well set, leaves the place stronger than before; if otherwise, makes the man a cripple all his days. These things we do but briefly name, and sundry other advantages of the like nature that sin makes use of to produce this effect, might also be instanced in; but these may suffice unto our present purpose. Whatever it useth, itself is still the principle; and this is no small demonstration of its efficacy and power.

CHAP. XVI.

The strength of indwelling sin, manifested from its power and effects in persons unregenerate.

It is of the power and efficacy of indwelling sin, as it remains in several degrees in believers, that we are treating.

Now I have elsewhere shewed, that the nature and all the natural properties of it do still remain in them: though therefore we cannot prove directly what is the strength of sin in them, from what its power is in those in whom it is only checked and not at all weakened; yet may we, from an observation thereof, caution believers of the real power of that mortal enemy with whom they have to do.

If the plague do violently rage in one city, destroying multitudes, and there be in another an infection of the same kind, which yet arises not unto that height and fury there, by reason of the correction that it meets withal from a better air, and remedies used; yet a man may demonstrate unto the inhabitants the force and danger of that infection got in among them, by the effects that it hath and doth produce among others, who have not the benefit of the preventives and preservatives which they enjoy; which will both teach them to value the means of their preservation, and be the more watchful against the power of the infection that is among them. It is so in this case. Believers may be taught what is the power and efficacy of that plague of sin, which is in and among them, by the effects the same plague produceth in and among others, who have not those corrections of its poison, and those preservatives from death which the Lord Jesus Christ hath furnished them withal.

Having then fixed on the demonstration of the power of sin, from the effects it doth produce, and having given a double instance hereof in believers themselves, I shall now farther evidence the same truth, or pursue the same evidence of it, by shewing somewhat of the power that it acteth in them who are unregenerate, and so have not the remedies against it which believers are furnished withal.

I shall not handle the whole power of sin in unregenerate persons, which is a very large field, and not the business I have in hand; but only by some few instances of its effects in them, intimate, as I said, unto believers, what they have to deal withal.

1. It appears in the violence it offers to the nature of man, compelling them unto sins, fully contrary to all the principles of the reasonable nature wherewith they are endued from God. Every creature of God hath in its

creation, a law of operation implanted in it, which is the rule of all that proceedeth from it, of all that it doth of its own accord. So the fire ascends upwards, bodies that are weighty and heavy descend; the water flows, each according to the principles of their nature, which give them the law of their operation. That which hinders them in their operation is force and violence, as that which hinders a stone from descending, or the fire from going upwards. That which forceth them to move contrary to the law of their nature, as a stone to go upwards, or the fire to descend, is in its kind the greatest violence, of which the degrees are endless. Now that which should take a great millstone, and fling it upwards into the air, all would acknowledge to be a matter of wonderful force, power, and efficacy.

Man also hath his law of operation and working concreated with him. And this may be considered two ways; either, first, as it is common to him with other creatures; or as peculiar, with reference unto that special end for which he was made. Some things are, I say, in this law of nature common to man with other creatures; as to nourish their young, to live quietly with them of the same kind and race with them; to seek and follow after that which is good for them in that state and condition wherein they are created. These are things which all brute living creatures have in the law of their nature, as man also hath.

But now besides these things, man being created in an especial manner to give glory to God by rational and moral obedience, and so to obtain a reward in the enjoyment of him; there are many things in the law of his creation, that are peculiar to him; as to love God above all, to seek the enjoyment of him as his chiefest good and last end, to inquire after his mind and will, and to yield obedience, and the like. All which are part of the law of his nature.

Now these things are not distinguished so, as though a man might perform the actions of the law of his nature which are common to him with other creatures, merely from the principles of his nature, as they do; but the law of his dependance upon God, and doing all things in obedience unto him, passeth on them all also. He can never be considered as a

mere creature, but as a creature made for the glory of God by rational moral obedience; rational, because by him chosen, and performed with reason; and moral, because regulated by a law whereunto reason doth attend.

For instance; it is common to man with other creatures, to take care for the nourishing of his children, of the young helpless ones that receive their being by him. There is implanted in him, in the principles of his nature, concreated with them, a love and care for them; so is it with other living creatures. Now let other creatures answer this instinct and inclination, and be not hardened against them like the foolish ostrich, unto whom God hath not implanted this natural wisdom, Job xxxix. 16, 17. they fully answer the law of their creation. With man it is not so; it is not enough for him to answer the instinct and secret impulse and inclination of his nature and kind, as in the nourishing of his children; but he must do it also in subjection to God, and obey him therein, and doing it unto his glory; the law of moral obedience passing over all his whole being, and all his operations; but in these things lie, as it were, the whole of a man, namely, in the things which are implanted in his nature as a creature, common to him with all other living creatures, seconded by the command or will of God, as he is a creature capable of yielding moral obedience, and doing all things for his glory.

That then which shall drive and compel a man to transgress this law of his nature, which is not only as to throw millstones upward, to drive beasts from taking care of their young, to take from cattle of the same kind the herding of themselves in quietness, but, moreover, to cast off what lies in him, his fundamental dependance on God, as a creature made to yield him obedience, must needs be esteemed of great force and efficacy.

Now this is frequently done by indwelling sin in persons unregenerate. Let us take some few instances.

(1.) There is nothing that is more deeply inlaid in the principles of the natures of all living creatures, and so of man himself, than a love unto, and a care for, the preservation and nourishing of their young; many brute creatures will die for them; some feed them with their own flesh and blood; all deprive themselves of that food which nature directs them

to their best, to impart it to them; and acting in their behalf to the utmost of their power.

Now such is the efficacy, power, and force of indwelling sin in man, an infection that the nature of other creatures knows nothing of, that in many it prevails to stop this fountain, to beat back the stream of natural affections, to root up the principles of the law of nature, and to drive them unto a neglect, a destruction, of the fruit of their own loins. Paul tells us of the old Gentiles, that they were ἄστοργοι, Rom. i. 31. 'without natural affection;' that which he aims at is that barbarous custom among the Romans, who ofttimes to spare the trouble in the education of their children, and to be at liberty to satisfy their lusts, destroyed their own children from the womb. So far did the strength of sin prevail to obliterate the law of nature, and to repel the force and power of it.

Examples of this nature are common in all nations; amongst ourselves, of women murdering their own children, through the deceitful reasoning of sin. And herein sin turns the strong current of nature, darkens all the light of God in the soul, controls all natural principles influenced with the power of the command and will of God. But yet this evil hath, through the efficacy of sin, received a fearful aggravation. Men have not only slain, but cruelly sacrificed, their children to satisfy their lusts. The apostle reckons idolatry, and so consequently all superstition, among the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 20. that is, the fruit and product of indwelling sin. Now from hence it is that men have offered that horrid and unspeakable violence to the law of nature mentioned. So the psalmist tells us, Psal, cvi. 37, 38. The same is again mentioned, Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. and in sundry other places. The whole manner of that abomination I have elsewhere declared. For the present it may suffice to intimate, that they took their children and burnt them to ashes in a soft fire; the wicked priests that assisted in the sacrifice affording them this relief, that they made a noise and clamour, that the vile wretches might not hear the woful moans and cries of the poor dying tormented infants. I suppose in this case we need no farther evidence. Naturalists can give no rational account, they can only admire the secret force of that little

fish, which, they say, will stop a ship in full sail in the midst of the sea. And we must acknowledge that it is beyond our power to give an account of that secret force and unsearchable deceit that is in that inbred traitor, sin, that cannot only stop the course of nature, when all the sails of it that carry it forward are so filled as they are in that of affections to children, but also drive it backward with such a violence and force, as to cause men so to deal with their own children, as a good man would not be hired with any reward to deal with his dog. And it may not be to the disadvantage of the best, to know and consider, that they carry that about them, and in them, which in others hath produced these effects.

The like may be spoken of all other sins against the prime dictates of the law of nature, that mankind is or hath been stained and defamed withal. Murder of parents and children, of wives and husbands, sodomy, incest, and the like enormities; in all which sin prevails in men against the whole law of their being and dependance upon God.

What should I reckon up the murders of Cain and Abel, the treason of Judas, with their aggravations; or remind the filth and villany of Nero, in whom sin seemed to design an instance of what it could debase the nature of man unto; in a word, all the studied, premeditated perjuries; all the designed, bloody revenges; all the filth and uncleanness; all the enmity to God and his ways that is in the world, is fruit growing from this root alone.

2. It evidences its efficacy in keeping men off from believing under the dispensation of the gospel. This evidence must be a little farther cleared.

(1.) Under the dispensation of the gospel, there are but few that do believe. So the preachers of it complain, Isa. liii. 1. 'Who hath believed our report?' which the apostle interprets of the paucity of believers. John xii. 38, our Saviour Christ himself tells us that 'many are called,' the word is preached unto many, 'but few are chosen.' And so the church complains of its number, Micah vi. 1. Few there be who enter the narrow gate; daily experience confirms this woful observation. How many villages, parishes, yea, towns, may we go unto, where the gospel, it may be, hath been preached many years, and perhaps scarce meet a true believer in them, and one who shews forth the death of Christ in his conver-

sation. In the best places, and most eminent for profession, are not such persons like the berries after the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three in the top of the upmost boughs, and four or five in the highest branches?

(2.) There is proposed to men in the preaching of the gospel, as motives unto believing, every thing in conjunction that severally prevail with men to do whatever else they do in their lives. Whatever any one doth with consideration, he doth it either because it is reasonable and good for him so to do, or profitable and advantageous, or pleasant, or lastly, necessary for the avoidance of evil; whatever, I say, men do with consideration, whether it be good or evil, whether it be in the works of this life or in things that lead to another, they do it from one or other of the reasons or motives mentioned. And, God knows, ofttimes they are very poor and mean in their kind, that men are prevailed upon by. How often will men for a very little pleasure, a very little profit, be induced to do that which shall imbitter their lives, and damn their souls. And what industry will they use to avoid that which they apprehend evil or grievous to them. And any one of these is enough to oil the wheels of men's utmost endeavours, and set men at work to the purpose.

But now all these things centre in the proposal of the gospel, and the command of believing; and every one of them in a kind, that the whole world can propose nothing like unto it.

[1.] It is the most reasonable thing that can be proposed to the understanding of a man, that he who through his own default hath lost that way of bringing glory to God and saving his own soul (for which ends he was made), that he was first placed in, should accept of and embrace that other blessed, easy, safe, excellent way for the attaining of the ends mentioned, which God in infinite grace, love, mercy, wisdom, and righteousness, hath found out, and doth propose unto him. And,

[2.] It is the profitablest thing that a man can possibly be invited unto; if there be any profit or benefit, any advantage in the forgiveness of sins, in the love and favour of God, in a blessed immortality, in eternal glory. And,

[3.] It is most pleasant also. Surely it is a pleasant

thing to be brought out of darkness into light, out of a dungeon unto a throne, from captivity and slavery to Satan and cursed lusts, to the glorious liberty of the children of God, with a thousand heavenly sweetnesses not now to be mentioned. And,

[4.] It is surely necessary, and that not only from the command of God, who hath the supreme authority over us, but also indispensably so for the avoidance of eternal ruin of body and soul, Matt. xvi. 16. It is constantly proposed under these terms, believe, or you perish under the weight of the wrath of the great God, and that for evermore.

But now, notwithstanding that all these considerations are preached unto men, and pressed upon them in the name of the great God, from day to day, from one year to another, yet, as was before observed, very few there are who set their hearts unto them, so as to embrace that which they lead unto. Tell men ten thousand times that this is wisdom, yea, riches; that all their profit lies in it, that they will assuredly and eternally perish, and that it may be within a few hours, if they receive not the gospel, assure them that it is their only interest and concernment, let them know that God himself speaks all this unto them; yet all is one, they regard it not, set not their hearts unto it, but, as it were, plainly say, We will have nothing to do with these things; they will rather perish in their lusts than accept of mercy.

(3.) It is indwelling sin that both disenableth men unto, and hinders them from, believing, and that alone. Blindness of mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made blind by sin, and cannot see his excellencies; obstinate, and will not lay hold of his righteousness; senseless, and take no notice of their own eternal concernments.

Now certainly that which can prevail with men wise and sober, and prudent in other things, to neglect and despise the love of God, the blood of Christ, the eternal welfare of their own souls, upon weak and worthless pretences, must be acknowledged to have an astonishable force and efficacy accompanying it.

Whose heart, who hath once heard of the ways of God,

can but bleed to see poor souls eternally perishing under a thousand gracious invitations to accept of mercy and pardon in the blood of Christ? And can we but be astonished at the power of that principle from whence it is that they run headlong to their own destruction? And yet all this befalls them from the power and deceit of sin that dwelleth in them.

3. It is evident in their total apostacies. Many men not really converted, are much wrought upon by the word. The apostle tells us, that they do 'clean escape them that live in error;' 2 Pet. ii. 18. They separate themselves from idolatry and false worship, owning and professing the truth; and they also escape the pollutions of the world, ver. 20. that is, 'the corruption that is in the world through lust,' as he expresseth it, chap. i. 4. those filthy, corrupt, and unclean ways, which the men of the world, in the pursuit of their lusts, do walk and live in; these they escape from in the amendment of their lives, and ordering of their conversation, according to the convictions which they have from the word. For so he tells us, that all this is brought about 'through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;' that is, by the preaching of the gospel: they are so far wrought upon as to forsake all ways of false worship, to profess the truth, to reform their lives, and to walk answerable to the convictions that are upon them.

By this means do they gain the reputation of professors; 'They have a name to live;' Rev. iii. 1. and are made partakers of some or all of those privileges of the gospel, that are numbered by the apostle, Heb. vi. 4, 5.

It is not my present business to show how far, or wherein, a man may be effectually wrought upon by the word, and yet not be really wrought over to close with Christ; or what may be the utmost bounds and limits of a common work of grace upon unregenerate men. It is on all hands confessed that it may be carried on so far, that it is very difficult to discern between its effects and productions, and those of that grace which is special and saving.

But now, notwithstanding all this, we see many of these daily fall off from God, utterly and wickedly; some into debauchery and uncleanness, some to worldliness and covetousness, some to be persecutors of the saints, all to the

perdition of their own souls. How this comes about, the apostle declares in that place mentioned; they are, saith he, entangled again; to entice and entangle, as I have shewed before from James i. 14, 15. is the proper work of indwelling sin; it is that alone which entangles the soul; as the apostle speaks, ver. 18. They are allured from their whole profession, into cursed apostacy, through the lusts of the flesh.

It prevails upon them through its deceit and power to an utter relinquishment of their profession, and their whole engagement unto God. And this several ways evinces the greatness of its strength and efficacy.

(1.) In that it giveth stop or control unto that exceeding greatness of power which is put forth in the word, in their conviction and reformation. We see it by experience, that men are not easily wrought upon by the word; the most of men can live under the dispensation of it all the days of their lives, and continue as senseless and stupid as the seats they sit upon, or the flint in the rock of stone. Mighty difficulties and prejudices must be conquered, great strokes must be given to the conscience before this can be brought about. It is as the stopping of a river in his course, and turning his streams another way; the hindering of a stone in his falling downwards, or the turning away of the wild ass, when furiously set to pursue his way, as the prophet speaks, Jer. ii. 24. To turn men from their corrupt ways, sins, and pleasures; to make them pray, fast, hear, and do many things contrary to the principle of flesh, which is secretly predominant in them, willingly and gladly; to cause them to profess Christ and the gospel, it may be under some trials and reproaches; to give them light to see into sundry mysteries, and gifts for the discharge of sundry duties; to make dead, blind, senseless men to walk, and talk, and do all the outward offices and duties of living and healthy men, with the like attendencies of conviction and reformation, are the effects and products of mighty power and strength. Indeed the power that the Holy Ghost puts forth by the word, in the staggering and conviction of sinners, in the wakening of their consciences, the enlightening of their minds, the changing of their affections, the awing of their hearts, the reforming of their lives, and compelling them to duties, is inexpressible.

But now, unto all these is there check and control given by indwelling sin. It prevails against this whole work of the Spirit by the word, with all the advantages of providential dispensations, in afflictions and mercies, wherewith it is attended. When sin is once enraged, all these things become but like the withs and cords wherewith Samson was bound before his head was shaven: cry but to it, The Philistines are upon thee, there is a subtle, a suitable temptation, now shew thy strength and efficacy, all these things become like tow that have smelt the fire. Conscience is stifled, reputation in the church of God despised, light supplanted, the impressions of the word cast off, convictions digested, heaven and hell are despised; sin makes its way through all, and utterly turns the soul from the good and right ways of God. Sometimes it doth this subtilely, by imperceptible degrees, taking off all force of former impressions from the Spirit by the word, sullying conscience by degrees, hardening the heart, and making sensual the affections by various workings, that the poor backslider in heart scarce knows what he is doing, until he be come to the very bottom of all impiety, profaneness, and enmity against God. Sometimes falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation, it suddenly, and at once, plunges the soul into a course of alienation from God, and the profession of his ways.

(2.) It takes them off from those hopes of heaven, which upon their convictions, obedience, and temporary faith or believing, they had attained. There is a general hope of heaven, or at least of the escaping of hell, of an untroublesome immortality, in the most sottish and stupid souls in the world, who either by tradition or instruction from the word, are persuaded that there is another state of things to come after this life; but it is in unconvinced, unenlightened persons, a dull, senseless, unaffecting thing, that hath no other hold upon them, nor power in them, but only to keep them free from the trouble and perplexity of contrary thoughts and apprehensions. The matter is otherwise with them who by the word are so wrought upon as we have before declared; their hope of heaven and a blessed immortality is ofttimes accompanied with great joys and exultations, and is a relief unto them, under and against the

worst of their fears and trials. It is such as they would not part withal for all the world; and upon all occasions they retreat in their minds unto it, for comfort and relief.

Now all this by the power of sin are they prevailed withal to forego. Let heaven go if it will, a blessed immortality with the enjoyment of God himself, sin must be served, and provision made to fulfil the lusts thereof.

If a man, in the things of this world, had such a hope of a large inheritance, of a kingdom, as wherein he is satisfied that it will not fail him, but that in the issue he shall surely enjoy it, and lead a happy and a glorious life in the possession of it many days; if one should go to him and tell him, It is true, the kingdom you look for is an ample and honourable dominion, full of all good things desirable, and you may attain it; but come, cast away all hopes and expectations of it, and come join with me in the service and slavery of such or such an oppressing tyrant. You will easily grant, he must have some strange bewitching power with him, that should prevail with a man in his wits to follow his advice. Yet thus it is, and much more so, in the case we have in hand. Sin itself cannot deny, but that the kingdom of heaven, which the soul is in hope and expectation of, is glorious and excellent, nor doth it go about to convince him that his thoughts of it are vain, and such as will deceive him, but plainly prevails with him to cast away his hopes, to despise his kingdom that he was in expectation of, and that upon no other motive but that he may serve some worldly, cruel, or filthy and sensual lust; certainly here lies a secret efficacy, whose depths can not be fathomed.

(3.) The apostle manifests the power of the entanglements of sin in and upon apostates, in that it turns them off from 'the way of righteousness after they have known it;' 2 Pet. ii. 21. It will be found at the last day an evil thing and a bitter, that men live all their days in the service of sin, self, and the world, refusing to make any trial of the ways of God whereunto they are invited; though they have no experience of their excellency, beauty, pleasantness, safety; yet, having evidence brought unto them from God himself, that they are so, the refusal of them will, I say, be bitterness in the latter end. But their condition

is yet far worse, who, as the apostle speaks, having known the way of righteousness, are by the power of indwelling sin, turned aside from the holy commandment. To leave God for the devil, after a man hath made some trial of him and his service; heaven for hell, after a man hath had some cheering, refreshing thoughts of it; the fellowship of the saints, for an ale-house or a brothel-house, after a man hath been admitted unto their communion, and tasted of the pleasantness of it; to leave walking in pure, clear, straight paths, to wallow in mire, draughts and filth, this will be for a lamentation; yet this doth sin prevail upon apostates unto; and that against all their light, conviction, experiences, professions, engagements, or whatever may be strong upon them to keep them up to the known ways of righteousness.

(4.) It evinces its strength in them by prevailing with them unto a total renunciation of God as revealed in Christ, and the power of all gospel truth, in the sin against the Holy Ghost. I do not now precisely determine what is the sin against the Holy Ghost; nor wherein it doth consist. There are different apprehensions of it; all agree in this; that by it an end is put to all dealings between God and man in a way of grace. It is a sin unto death. And this doth the hardness and blindness of many men's hearts bring them to; they are by them at length set out of the reach of mercy. They choose to have no more to do with God; and God swears that they shall never enter into his rest. So sin brings forth death. A man by it is brought to renounce the end for which he was made; wilfully to reject the means of his coming to the enjoyment of God, to provoke him to his face; and so to perish in his rebellion.

I have not mentioned these things, as though I hoped by them to set out to the full the power of indwelling sin in unregenerate men: only by a few instances I thought to give a glimpse of it. He that would have a fuller view of it, had need only to open his eyes, to take a little view of that wickedness which reigneth, yea, rageth all the world over. Let him consider the prevailing flood of the things mentioned by Paul to be 'the fruits of the flesh,' Gal. v. 19—21. that is, among the sons of men, in all places, nations, cities, towns, parishes; and then let him add there-

unto but this one consideration, that the world, which is full of the steam, filth, and blood of these abominations, as to their outward actings of them, is a pleasant garden, a paradise, compared to the heart of man, wherein they are all conceived, and hourly millions of more vile abominations, which being stifled in the womb, by some of the ways before insisted on, they are never able to bring forth to light. Let a man, I say, using the law for his light and rule, take this course, and if he have any spiritual discerning, he may quickly attain satisfaction in this matter.

And I shewed in the entrance of this discourse, how this consideration doth fully confirm the truth proposed.

CHAP. XVII.

The strength of sin evidenced from its resistance unto the power of the law.

THE measure of the strength of any person, or defenced city, may be well taken from the opposition that they are able to withstand, and not be prevailed against. If we hear of a city that has endured a long siege from a potent enemy, and yet is not taken or conquered, whose walls have endured great batteries, and are not demolished, though we have never seen the place, yet we conclude it strong, if not impregnable.

And this consideration will also evidence the power and strength of indwelling sin; it is able to hold out, and not only to live, but also to secure its reign and dominion, against very strong opposition that is made unto it.

I shall instance only in the opposition that is made unto it by the law, which is ofttimes great and terrible, always fruitless; all its assaults are borne by it, and it is not prevailed against. There are sundry things wherein the law opposeth itself to sin, and the power of it. As,

(1.) It discovers it; sin in the soul is like a secret hectical distemper in the body; its being unknown and unperceived, is one great means of its prevalency. Or as traitors in a civil state, whilst they lie hid, they vigorously carry on their design. The greatest part of men in the world, know nothing of this sickness, yea, death of their

souls. Though they have been taught somewhat of the doctrine of it, yet they know nothing of its power. They know it not so, as to deal with it as their mortal enemy. As a man, whatever he be told, cannot be said to know that he hath a hectical fever, if he love his life, and set not himself to stop its progress. This then the law doth, it discovers this enemy; it convinceth the soul that there is such a traitor harbouring in his bosom, Rom. vii. 7. 'I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.' I had not known it, that is, fully, clearly, distinctly. Conscience will somewhat tumultuate about it; but a man cannot know it clearly and distinctly from thence. It gives a man such a sight of it, as the blind man had in the gospel upon the first touch of his eyes, 'He saw men like trees walking,' obscurely, confusedly; but when the law comes, that gives the soul a distinct sight of this indwelling sin. Again, 'I had not known it,' that is, the depths of it, the root, the habitual inclination of my nature to sin, which is here called lust; as it is by James, chap. i. 14. I had not known it or not known it to be sin, 'but by the law.' This then the law doth, it draws out this traitor from its secret lurking places, the intimate recesses of the soul. A man when the law comes is no more ignorant of his enemy; if he will now perish by him, it is openly and knowingly; he cannot but say that the law warned him of him, discovered him unto him, yea, and raised a concourse about him in the soul of various affections, as an officer doth, that discovers a thief or robber, calling out for assistance to apprehend him.

(2.) The law not only discovers sin, but discovers it to be a very bad inmate, dangerous, yea, pernicious to the soul; Rom. vii. 13. 'Was then that which is good,' that is, the law, 'made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.' There are many things in this verse wherein we are not at present concerned; that which I only aim at is, the manifestation of sin by the law, it appears to be sin; and the manifestation of it in its own colours, it appears to be exceeding sinful. The law gives the soul to know the filth

and guilt of this indwelling sin, how great they are, how vile it is; what an abomination, what an enmity to God, how hated of him, the soul shall never more look upon it as a small matter, what thoughts soever it had of it before, whereby it is greatly surprised. As a man that finds himself somewhat distempered, sending for a physician of skill, when he comes, requires his judgment of his distemper. He considering his condition, tells him, Alas, I am sorry for you, the case is far otherwise with you than you imagine, your disease is mortal, and it hath proceeded so far pressing upon your spirits, and infecting the whole mass of your blood, that I doubt unless most effectual remedies be used, you will live but very few hours. So is it in this case; a man may have some trouble in his mind and conscience about indwelling sin; he finds all not well, as it should be with him, more from the effects of sin, and its continual eruptions, than the nature of it, which he hopes to wrestle withal; but now, when the law comes, that lets the soul know, that its disease is deadly and mortal, that it is exceeding sinful, as being the root and cause of all his alienation from God; and thus also the law proceeds against it.

(3.) The law judgeth the person, or lets the sinner plainly know what he is to expect upon the account of this sin. This is the law's proper work, its discovering property is but preparative to its judging. The law is itself, when it is in the throne. Here it minceth not the matter with sinners, as we use to do one with another, but tells him plainly, 'Thou art the man,' in whom this exceeding sinful sin doth dwell, and you must answer for the guilt of it. And this, methinks, if any thing, should rouse up a man to set himself in opposition to it, yea, utterly to destroy it. The law lets him know that upon the account of this sin, he is obnoxious to the curse and wrath of the great God against him; yea, pronounceth the sentence of everlasting condemnation upon him upon that account: abide in this state and perish, is its language. It leaves not the soul without this warning in this world, and will leave it without excuse on that account in the world to come.

(4.) The law so follows on its sentence, that it disquiets and affrights the soul, and suffers it not to enjoy the least rest or quietness in harbouring its sinful inmate. When-

ever the soul hath indulged to its commands, made provision for it, immediately the law flies upon it, with the wrath and terror of the Lord, makes it quake and tremble; it shall have no rest, but is like a poor beast that hath a deadly arrow sticking in its sides, that makes it restless wherever it is, and whatever it doth.

(5.) The law stays not here, but also it slays the soul, Rom. vii. 3. that is, by its conviction of the nature, power, and desert of this indwelling sin, it deprives him in whom it is of all that life of self-righteousness and hope, which formerly he sustained himself withal; it leaves him as a poor, dead, helpless, hopeless creature. And all this in the pursuit of that opposition that it makes against this sin. May we not now expect, that the power of it will be quelled, and its strength broken; that it will die away before these strokes of the law of God? but the truth is, such is its power and strength, that it is quite otherwise; like him whom the poets feign to be born of the earth, when one thought to slay him by casting him on the ground, by every fall he recovered new strength, and was more vigorous than formerly. So is it with all the falls and repulses that are given to indwelling sin by the law. For,

[1.] It is not conquered. A conquest infers two things in respect of the conquered; first, loss of dominion; and secondly, loss of strength. Wherever any one is conquered, he is despoiled of both these. He loses both his authority and his power. So the strong man armed, being prevailed against, he is bound, and his goods are spoiled. But now neither of these befalls indwelling sin by the assaults of the law; it loseth not one jot of its dominion nor strength by all the blows that are given unto it. The law cannot do this thing, Rom. viii. 3. it cannot deprive sin of its power and dominion, for he that 'is under the law is also under sin;' that is, whatever power the law gets upon the conscience of a man, so that he fear to sin, lest the sentence and curse of it should befall him, yet sin still reigns and rules in his heart. Therefore, saith the apostle, Rom. vi. 14. 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace;' intimating plainly, that though a person be in never so much subjection to the authority of the law, yet that will not exempt and acquit him from the dominion of

sin. Yea, the law by all its work upon the soul, instead of freeing and acquitting it from the reign of sin and bondage unto it, doth accidentally greatly increase its misery and bondage; as the sentence of the judge on the bench against a malefactor adds to his misery. The soul is under the dominion of sin, and it may be, abides in its woful condition in much security, fearing neither sin nor judgment. The law setting upon him in this condition by all the ways forementioned, brings him into great trouble and perplexity, fear, and terror, but delivers him not at all. So that it is with the soul, as it was with the Israelites when Moses had delivered his message unto Pharaoh, they were so far from getting liberty by it, that their bondage was increased, and 'they found that they were in a very evil case;' Exod. v. 17. Yea, and we shall see, that sin doth like Pharaoh, finding its rule disturbed, it grows more outrageously oppressive, and doubles the bondage of their souls. This is not then the work of the law to destroy sin, or deprive it of that dominion which it hath by nature. Nor doth it by all these strokes of the law lose any thing of its strength. It continues both its authority and its force; it is neither destroyed, nor weakened. Yea,

[2.] It is so far from being conquered, that it is only enraged. The whole work of the law, doth only provoke and enrage sin; and cause it, as it hath opportunity, to put out its strength with more power, and vigour, and force than formerly. This the apostle shews at large, Rom. vii. 9—13. But you will say, Do we not see it by experience, that many are wrought upon by the preaching of the law, to a relinquishment of many sins, and amendment of their lives, and to a great contending against the eruptions of those other corruptions which they cannot yet mortify? and it cannot be denied, but that great is the power and efficacy of the law, when preached and applied to the conscience in a due manner. I answer,

1st. It is acknowledged, that very great and effectual is the power of the law of God. Great are the effects that are wrought by it; and it shall surely accomplish every end for which of God it is appointed. But yet the subduing of sin, is none of its work; it is not designed of God unto that purpose; and therefore it is no dishonour, if it cannot do that which is not its proper work, Rom. viii. 3.

2dly. Whatever effects it have upon some, yet we see that in the most, such is the power and prevalency of sin, that it takes no impression at all upon them. May you not see every where men living many years in congregations where the law is powerfully preached, and applied unto the consciences as to all the ends and purposes for which the Lord is pleased to make use of it, and not once be moved by it; that receive no more impression from the stroke of it, than blows with a straw would give to an adamant? They are neither convinced by it, nor terrified, nor awed, nor instructed, but continue deaf, ignorant, senseless, secure, as if they had never been told of the guilt of sin, or terror of the Lord. Such as these are congregations full of, who proclaim the triumphing power of sin over the dispensation of the law.

3dly. When any of the effects mentioned are wrought, it is not from the power of the letter of the law, but from the actual efficacy of the Spirit of God, putting forth his virtue and power for that end and purpose; and we deny not but that the Spirit of the Lord is able to restrain and quell the power of lust when he pleaseth; and some ways whereby he is pleased so to do we have formerly considered. But,

4thly. Notwithstanding all that may be observed of the power of the law upon the souls of men, yet it is most evident that lust is not conquered, not subdued, nor mortified by it. For,

(1st.) Though the course of sin may be repelled for a season by the dispensation of the law, yet the spring and fountain of it, is not dried up thereby. Though it withdraws and hides itself for a season, it is, as I have elsewhere shewed, but to shift out of a storm, and then to return again. As a traveller, in his way meeting with a violent storm of thunder and rain, immediately turns out of his way, to some house or tree for his shelter; but yet this causeth him not to give over his journey; so soon as the storm is over, he returns to his way and progress again. So it is with men in bondage unto sin: they are in a course of pursuing their lust; the law meets with them in a storm of thunder and lightning from heaven, terrifies and hinders them in their way; this turns them for a season out of their course; they will run

to prayer or amendment of life, for some shelter from the storm of wrath which is feared coming upon their consciences. But is their course stopped? are their principles altered? Not at all; so soon as the storm is over, that they begin to wear out that sense and the terror that was upon them, they return to their former course, in the service of sin again. This was the state with Pharaoh once and again.

(2dly.) In such seasons sin is not conquered but diverted. When it seems to fall under the power of the law, indeed it is only turned into a new channel, it is not dried up. If you go and set a dam against the streams of a river, that you suffer no water to pass in the old course and channel, but it breaks out another way, and turns all its streams in a new course, you will not say you have dried up that river; though some that come and look into the old channel may think, perhaps, that the waters are utterly gone. So is it in this case; the streams of sin, it may be, run in open sensuality and profaneness, in drunkenness and viciousness; the preaching of the law sets a dam against these courses; conscience is terrified, and the man dares not walk in the ways wherein he hath been formerly engaged. His companions in sin not finding him in his old ways begin to laugh at him, as one that is converted and growing precise. Professors themselves begin to be persuaded that the work of God is upon his heart, because they see his old streams dried up; but if there have been only a work of the law upon him, there is a dam put to his course, but the spring of sin is not dried up, only the streams of it are turned another way. It may be the man is fallen upon other more secret, or more spiritual sins; or, if he be beat from them also, the whole strength of lust and sin will take up its residence in self-righteousness, and pour out thereby as filthy streams as in any other way whatever. So that notwithstanding the whole work of the law upon the souls of men, indwelling sin will keep alive in them still, which is another evidence of its great power and strength.

I shall yet touch upon some other evidences of the same truth, that I have under consideration; but I shall be brief in them.

(3dly.) In the next place, then, the great endeavours of men ignorant of the righteousness of Christ for the subduing

and mortifying of sin, which are all fruitless, do evidence the great strength and power of it.

Men who have no strength against sin, may yet be made sensible of the strength of sin. The way whereby for the most part they come to that knowledge, is by some previous sense that they have of the guilt of sin. This men have by the light of their consciences; they cannot avoid it. This is not a thing in their choice; whether they will or no, they cannot but know sin to be evil, and that such an evil that renders them obnoxious to the judgment of God. This galls the minds and consciences of some so far as that they are kept in awe, and dare not sin as they would. Being awed with a sense of the guilt of sin, and the terror of the Lord, men begin to endeavour to abstain from sin, at least from such sins as they have been most terrified about. Whilst they have this design in hand, the strength and power of sin begins to discover itself unto them. They begin to find that there is something in them, that is not in their own power; for notwithstanding their resolutions and purposes, they sin still; and that so, or in such a manner, as that their consciences inform them that they must therefore perish eternally. This puts them on self-endeavours to suppress the eruption of sin, because they cannot be quiet unless so they do; nor have any rest or peace within. Now being ignorant of that only way whereby sin is to be mortified, that is, by the Spirit of Christ, they fix on many ways in their own strength to suppress it, if not to slay it; as being ignorant of that only way whereby consciences burdened with the guilt of sin may be pacified, that is, by the blood of Christ; they endeavour by many other ways to accomplish that end in vain; for no man, by any self-endeavours, can obtain peace with God.

Some of the ways whereby they endeavour to suppress the power of sin, which casts them into an unquiet condition, and their insufficiency for that end we must look into.

(1.) They will promise and bind themselves by vows from those sins, which they have been most liable unto, and so have been most perplexed withal. The psalmist shews this to be one great engine whereby false and hypocritical persons do endeavour to extricate and deliver themselves out of trouble and perplexity. They make promises to God,

which he calls flattering him with the lips, Psal. lxxviii. 36. So is it in this case; being freshly galled with the guilt of any sin, that by the power of their temptations, they, it may be, have frequently been overtaken in, they vow and promise, that at least for some such space of time as they will limit, they will not commit that sin again; and this course of proceeding is prescribed unto them by some who pretend to direct their consciences in this duty. Conscience of this now makes them watch over themselves as to the outward act of the sin that they are galled with; and so it hath one of these two effects; for either they do abstain from it for the time they have prefixed, or they do not: if they do not, as seldom they do, especially if it be a sin that hath a peculiar root in their nature and constitution, and is improved by custom into a habit, if any suitable temptation be presented unto them; their sin is increased, and therewith their terror, and they are wofully discouraged in making any opposition to sin; and therefore, for the most part, after one or two vain attempts, or more it may be, knowing no other way to mortify sin, but this of vowing against it, and keeping of that vow in their own strength, they give over all contests, and become wholly the servants of sin, being bounded only by outward considerations, without any serious endeavours for a recovery. Or, secondly, suppose that they have success in their resolutions, and do abstain from actual sins their appointed season; commonly one of these two things ensue; either they think that they have well discharged their duty, and so may a little now, at least for a season, indulge to their corruptions and lusts, and so are entangled again in the same snares of sin as formerly; or else they reckon that their vow and promise hath preserved them, and so sacrifice to their own net and drag, setting up a righteousness of their own against the grace of God; which is so far from weakening indwelling sin, that it strengthens it in the root and principle, that it may hereafter reign in the soul in security. Or, at the most, the best success that can be imagined unto this way of dealing with sin, is but the restraining of some outward eruptions of it, which tends nothing to the weakening of its power; and therefore such persons, by all their endeavours, are very far from being freed from the inward toiling, burning, disquieting, perplexing

power of sin. And this is the state of most men that are kept in bondage under the power of conviction. Hell, death, and the wrath of God, are continually presented unto their consciences; this makes them labour with all their strength against that in sin which most enrageth their consciences, and most increaseth their fears; that is, the actual eruption of it; for, for the most part, while they are freed from that they are safe; though in the mean time, sin lie tumultuating in, and defiling of, the heart continually. As with running sores, outward repelling medicines may skin them over, and hinder their corruption from coming forth; but the issue of them is, that they cause them to fester inwardly, and so prove, though it may be not so noisome and offensive as they were before, yet far more dangerous. So is it with this repelling of the power of corruption by men's vows, and promises against it; external eruptions are it may be restrained for a season; but the inward root and principle is not weakened in the least. And most commonly this is the issue of this way; that sin having gotten more strength, and being enraged by its restraint, breaks all its bounds, and captivates the soul unto all filthy abominations; which is the principle, as was before observed, of most of the visible apostacies which we have in the world, 2 Pet. ii. 19, 20.

The Holy Ghost compares sinners, because of the odious, fierce, poisonous nature of this indwelling sin, unto lions, bears, and asps, Isa. xi. 6—9. Now this is the excellency of gospel-grace, that it changes the nature and inward principles of these otherwise passionate and untamed beasts; making the wolf as the kid, the lion as the lamb, and the bear as the cow. When this is effected, they may safely be trusted in; 'a little child may lead them.' But these self-endeavours do not at all change the nature, but restrain their outward violence: he that takes a lion, or a wolf, and shuts him up from ravening, whilst yet his inward violence remains, may well expect that at one time or other they will break their bonds, and fall to their former ways of rapine and violence. However, shutting them up, doth not, as we see, change their natures, but only restrain their rage from doing open spoil. So it is in this case; it is grace alone that changeth the heart, and takes away that poison and

fierceness that is in them by nature; men's self-endeavours do but coerce them as to some outward eruptions. But,

(2.) Beyond bare vows and promises, with some watchfulness to observe them in a rational use of ordinary means, men have put, and some do yet put themselves on extraordinary ways of mortifying sin. This is the foundation of all that hath a shew of wisdom and religion in the papacy; their hours of prayer, fastings, their immuring and cloistering themselves, their pilgrimages, penances, and self-torturing discipline, spring all from this root. I shall not speak of the innumerable evils that have attended these self-invented ways of mortification, and how they all of them have been turned into means, occasions, and advantages of sinning; nor of the horrible hypocrisy which evidently cleaves unto the most of their observers; nor of that superstition which gives life to them all, being a thing rivetted in the natures of some, and their constitutions; fixed on others by inveterate prejudices; and the same by others taken up for secular advantages; but I will suppose the best that can be made of it, and it will be found to be a self-invented design of men ignorant of the righteousness of God, to give a check to this power of indwelling sin whereof we speak. And it is almost incredible, what fearful self-macerations, and horrible sufferings this design hath carried men out unto: and undoubtedly their blind zeal and superstition will rise in judgment, and condemn the horrible sloth and negligence of the most of them to whom the Lord hath granted the saving light of the gospel. But what is the end of these things? The apostle in brief gives us an account, Rom. ix. 31, 32. They attain not the righteousness aimed at; they come not up unto a conformity to the law; sin is not mortified; no, nor the power of it weakened; but what it loses in sensual, in carnal pleasures, it takes up with great advantage, in blindness, darkness, superstition, self-righteousness and soul-pride, contempt of the gospel and the righteousness of it, and reigns no less than in the most profligate sinners in the world.

(3.) The strength, efficacy, and power of this law of sin, may be farther evidenced from its life and in-being in the soul, notwithstanding the wound that is given unto it,

in the first conversion of the soul to God; and in the continual opposition that is made unto it by grace. But this is the subject and design of another endeavour.

It may now be expected, that we should here add the especial uses of all this discovery that hath been made of the power, deceit, prevalency, and success, of this great adversary of our souls. But as for what concerns that humility, self-abasement, watchfulness, diligence, and application unto the Lord Christ for relief, which will become those who find in themselves by experience the power of this law of sin, have been occasionally mentioned and inculcated through the whole preceding discourse; so for what concerns the actual mortification of it, I shall only recommend unto the reader for his direction, another small treatise written long since unto that purpose, which I suppose he may do well to consider together with this, if he find these things to be his concernment.

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

ΦΡΌΝΗΜΑ ΤΟΥ̃ ΠΝΕΎΜΑΤΟΣ;

OR, THE

GRACE AND DUTY

OF BEING

SPIRITUALLY MINDED,

DECLARED AND PRACTICALLY IMPROVED.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace.—Rom. viii. 6.
Set your affections on things above.—Col. iii. 3.

PREFACE.

I THINK it necessary to give the reader a brief account of the nature and design of the plain ensuing discourse, which may both direct him in the reading, and be some kind of apology for myself in the publishing of it. He may therefore know, that the thoughts here communicated, were originally private meditations for my own use, in a season wherein I was every way unable to do any thing for the edification of others, and far from expectation that ever I should be so able any more in this world. Receiving, as I thought, some benefit and satisfaction in the exercise of my own meditations therein, when God was graciously pleased to restore a little strength unto me, I insisted on the same subject, in the instruction of a private congregation; and this I did, partly out of a sense of the advantage I had received myself by being conversant in them; and partly from an apprehension that the duties directed and pressed unto, in the whole discourse, were seasonable from all sorts of present circumstances, to be declared and urged on the minds and consciences of professors. For leaving others unto the choice of their own methods and designs, I acknowledge that these are the two things whereby I regulate my work in the whole course of my ministry. To impart those truths, of whose power I hope I have had in some measure, a real experience, and to press those duties which present occasions, temptations, and other circum-

stances do render necessary to be attended unto in a peculiar manner, are the things which I would principally apply myself unto in the work of teaching others. For as in the work of the ministry, in general, the whole counsel of God concerning the salvation of the church by Jesus Christ is to be declared; so, in particular, we are not to fight uncertainly as men beating the air, nor shoot our arrows at random, without a certain scope and design. Knowledge of the flock whereof we are overseers, with a due consideration of their wants, their graces, their temptations, their light, their strength, and weakness are required herein. And when, in pursuance of that design, the preparation of the word to be dispensed, proceeds from zeal to the glory of God, and compassion unto the souls of men; when it is delivered with the demonstration of a due reverence unto God, whose word it is, and of authority towards them unto whom it is dispensed, with a deep sense of that great account which both they that preach, and they that hear the word preached, must shortly give, before the judgment-seat of Christ; there may be a comfortable expectation of a blessed issue of the whole work. But my present design is only to declare in particular, the reasons why I judged the preaching and publishing of this small and plain discourse concerning the Grace and Duty of being Spiritually Minded, not to be altogether unseasonable at this time, in the present circumstances of most Christians. And the first thing which I would observe unto this end is, the present importunity of the world to impose itself on the minds of men; and the various ways of insinuation whereby it possesseth and filleth them. If it attain hereunto, if it can fill the minds, the thoughts, and affections of men with itself, it will in *some,* fortify the soul against faith and obedience;

and in others, weaken all grace, and endanger eternal ruin.

For 'if we love the world the love of the Father is not in us;' and when the world fills our thoughts, it will entangle our affections. And first, the present state of all public affairs in it, with an apprehended concernment of private persons therein, continually exerciseth the thoughts of many, and is almost the only subject of their mutual converse. For the world is at present in a mighty hurry, and being in many places cast off from all foundations of steadfastness, it makes the minds of men giddy with its revolutions, or disorderly in the expectations of them.

Thoughts about these things are both allowable and unavoidable, if they take not the mind out of its own power, by their multiplicity, vehemency, and urgency, until it be unframed as unto spiritual things, retaining neither room nor time for their entertainment.

Hence men walk and talk, as if the world were all, when comparatively it is nothing.

And when men come with their warmed affections reeking with thoughts of these things unto the performance of, or attendance unto, any spiritual duty, it is very difficult for them, if not impossible, to stir up any grace unto a due and vigorous exercise. Unless this plausible advantage which the world hath obtained of insinuating itself and its occasions into the minds of men, so as to fill them and possess them, be watched against and obviated, so far, at least, as that it may not transform the mind into its own image and likeness, this grace of being spiritually minded, which is life and peace, cannot be attained nor kept unto its due exercise.

Nor can we be, any of us, delivered from this snare, at this season, without a watchful endeavour

to keep and preserve our minds in the constant contemplation of things spiritual and heavenly, proceeding from the prevalent adherence of our affections unto them, as will appear in the ensuing discourse.

Again, there are so great and pregnant evidences of the prevalency of an earthly worldly frame of spirit, in many who make profession of religion, that it is high time they were called unto a due consideration, how unanswerable they are therein, unto the power and spirituality of that religion which they do profess. There is no way whereby such a frame may be evinced to prevail in many; yea, in the generality of such professors, that is not manifest unto all. In their habits, attires, and vestments, in their usual converse and mispense of time, in their over liberal entertainment of themselves and others unto the borders of excess, and sundry other things of a like nature, there is in many such a conformity unto the world (a thing severely forbidden), that it is hard to make a distinction between them. And these things do manifest such a predominancy of carnal affections in the minds of men, as whatever may be pretended unto the contrary, is inconsistent with spiritual peace. To call men off from this evil frame of heart and mind, to discover the sin and danger of it, to direct them unto the ways and means whereby it may be effected, to supply their thoughts and affections with better objects, to discover and press that exercise of them which is indispensably required of all believers, if they design life and peace, is some part of the work of the ensuing discourse. It may be it will be judged but a weak attempt as unto the attaining of that end. But it cannot be denied to have these two advantages; first, that it is seasonable; and secondly, that it is sincerely intended. And if it have this only success, that it may occasion others who have more ability

and opportunity than I have, to bring in their assistance for an opposition unto the vehement and importunate insinuations of the world in these things, to have an entertainment in the minds of professors, this labour will not be lost. But things are come to that pass amongst us, that unless a more than ordinary vigorous exercise of the ministry of the word, with other means appointed unto the same end be engaged in, to recall professors unto that strict mortification, that sincerity of conversation, that separation from the ways of the world, that heavenly mindedness, that delight in the contemplation of spiritual things, which the gospel and the whole nature of Christian religion do require, we shall lose the glory of our profession, and leave it very uncertain what will be our eternal condition. The same may be spoken concerning love of the world, as unto the advantages and emoluments which men trust to attain unto themselves thereby. This is that which renders men earthly minded, and most remote from having their conversations above. In the pursuit of this corrupt affection do many professors of religion grow withering, useless, sapless, giving no evidence that the love of God abideth in them. On these and many other accounts, do many Christians evidence themselves to be strangers from spiritual mindedness, from a life of meditation and holy contemplation on things above; yet, unless we are found in these things in some good measure, no grace will thrive or flourish in us. No duty will be rightly performed by us, no condition sanctified or improved, nor are we prepared, in a due manner, or 'made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.' Wherefore, as was said, to direct and provoke men unto that which is the only remedy of all these evils, which alone is the means of giving

them a view into, and a foretaste of, eternal glory; especially unto such who are in my own condition, namely, in a very near approach unto a departure out of this world, is the design and scope of the ensuing discourse; which is recommended unto the grace of God for the benefit of the reader.

THE

GRACE AND DUTY

OF BEING

SPIRITUALLY MINDED.

'*But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*'—Rom. viii. 6.

CHAP. I.

The words of the text explained.

The expression in our translation sounds differently from that in the original. 'To be spiritually minded,' say we. In the original it is φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος; as that in the former part of the verse, is φρονημα τῆς σαρκὸς; which we render 'to be carnally minded.' In the margin we read, 'the minding of the flesh' and 'the minding of the Spirit.' And there is great variety in the rendering of the words in all translations both ancient and modern. 'Prudentia, sapientia, intelligentia, mens cogitatio, discretio, id quod Spiritus sapit;' 'the wisdom, the understanding, the mind, the thought or contrivance, the discretion of the Spirit, that which the Spirit savoureth,' are used to express it. All our English translations, from Tindal's, the first of them, have constantly used, 'to be spiritually minded.' Neither do I know any words whereby the emphasis of the original, considering the design of the apostle in the place, can be better expressed. But the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them must be farther inquired into.

In the whole verse there are two entire propositions, containing a double antithesis, the one in their subjects, the other in their predicates. And this opposition is the highest and greatest that is beneath eternal blessedness, and eternal ruin.

The opposite subjects, are the 'minding of the flesh,' and the 'minding of the Spirit;' or the being 'carnally minded,' and 'spiritually minded.' And these two do constitute two

states of mankind, unto the one of which every individual person in the world doth belong. And it is of the highest concernment unto the souls of men, to know whether of them they appertain unto. As unto the qualities expressed by the flesh and the Spirit, there may be a mixture of them in the same persons at the same time; there is so in all that are regenerate. For in them 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and these are contrary;' Gal. v. 17. Thus different contrary actings in the same subject constitute not distinct states. But where either of them is predominant or hath a prevalent rule in the soul, there it makes a different state. This distinction of states, the apostle expresseth, ver. 9. 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.' Some are 'in the flesh, and cannot please God,' ver. 8. they 'are after the flesh,' ver. 5. they 'walk after the flesh,' ver. 1. they 'live after the flesh,' ver. 13. This is one state. Others 'are in the Spirit,' ver. 9. 'after the Spirit,' ver. 5. 'walk after Spirit,' ver. 1. This is the other state. The first sort are carnally minded, the other are spiritually minded. Unto one of these doth every living man belong, he is under the ruling conduct of the flesh or of the Spirit; there is no middle state; though there are different degrees in each of these as to good and evil.

The difference between these two states is great, and the distance in a manner infinite, because an eternity in blessedness or misery doth depend upon it. And this at present is evidenced by the different fruits and effects of the principles and their operations which constitute these different states; which is expressed in the opposition that is between the predicates of the proposition; for the minding of the flesh is death; but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace.

'To be carnally minded is death.' Death, as it is absolutely penal, is either spiritual or eternal. The first of these it is formally, the other meritoriously. It is formally death spiritual; 'for they that are carnally minded, are dead in trespasses and sins;' Eph. ii. 1. 'For those who fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, are by nature children of wrath,' ver. 3. are penally under the power of spiritual death. 'They are dead in sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh;' Col. ii. 13. And it is death eternal,

meritoriously. 'For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die,' Rom. viii. 13. as 'the wages of sin is death;' chap. vi. 23.

The reason why the apostle denounces so woful a doom, so dreadful a sentence on the carnal mind, he declares in the two next verses: 'For the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject unto the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.' If it be thus with the carnal mind, it is no wonder that to be carnally minded is death; it is not meet it should be any thing else. That which is enmity against God, is under the curse of God.

In opposition hereunto it is affirmed, that 'to be spiritually minded,' or the minding of the Spirit, 'is life and peace.' And these are the things which we are particularly to inquire into; namely, What is this minding of the Spirit; and then, How it is life and peace.

1. The Spirit in this context is evidently used in a double sense, as is usual where both the Holy Spirit himself, and his work on the souls of men, are related unto. 1. The person of the Spirit of God himself, or the Holy Ghost is intended by it: ver. 9. 'If so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.' And so also ver. 11. 'The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead.' He is spoken of as the principal efficient cause of all the spiritual mercies and benefits here and afterward insisted on. 2. It is used for the principle of spiritual life wrought in all that are regenerate by the Holy Ghost. 'For that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' John iii. 6.

It is most probable that the name Spirit is here used in the latter sense, not for the Spirit himself, but for that which 'is born of the Spirit,' the principle of spiritual life in them that are born of God. For it is in its nature, actings, inclinations, and operations, opposed unto the flesh, ver. 1. 4, 5. But the flesh here intended is that inherent corrupt principle of depraved nature, whence all evil actions do proceed, and wherewith the actions of all evil men are vitiated. The opposition between them is the same with that mentioned and declared by the apostle, Gal. v. 17, 18, &c. Wherefore the Spirit in this place is the holy vital principle of new obedience wrought in the souls of believers by the Holy Ghost, enabling them to live unto God.

2. Unto this Spirit there is φρόνημα ascribed, which, as we have intimated, is translated with great variety. Φρόνησις, is the principal power and act of the mind. It is its light, wisdom, prudence, knowledge, understanding, and discretion. It is not so with respect unto speculation, or ratiocination merely; which is διάνοια, or σύνεσις. But this φρόνησις is its power as it is practical, including the habitual frame and inclination of the affections also. It is its faculty to conceive of things with a delight in them and adherence unto them, from that suitableness which it finds in them unto all its affections. Hence we translate φρονεῖν sometimes 'to think,' that is, to conceive and judge, Rom. xii. 3. Sometimes to 'set the affections,' Col. iii. 2. to have such an apprehension of things as to cleave unto them with our affections. Sometimes 'to mind;' 'to mind earthly things,' Phil. iii. 19. which includeth that relish and savour which the mind finds in the things it is fixed on. Nowhere doth it design a notional conception of things only; but principally the engagement of the affections unto the things which the mind apprehends.

Φρόνημα, the word here used, expresseth the actual exercise, τῆς φρονήσεως, of the power of the mind before described. Wherefore, the minding of the Spirit is the actual exercise of the mind as renewed by the Holy Ghost, as furnished with a principle of spiritual life and light in its conception of spiritual things, and the setting of its affections on them, as finding that relish and savour in them, wherewith it is pleased and satisfied.

And something we must yet farther observe, to give light unto this description of the minding of the Spirit, as it is here spoken of.

1. It is not spoken of absolutely as unto what it is in itself, but with respect unto its power and prevalency in us; significantly rendered, 'to be spiritually minded;' that is, to have the mind changed and renewed by a principle of spiritual life and light, so as to be continually acted and influenced thereby unto thoughts and meditations of spiritual things, from the affections cleaving unto them with delight and satisfaction. So on the contrary it is, when men mind earthly things. From a principle of love unto them, arising from their suitableness unto their corrupt affections, their thoughts,

meditations, and desires, are continually engaged about them. Wherefore,

2. Three things may be distinguished in the great duty of being spiritually minded, under which notion it is here recommended unto us.

1. The actual exercise of the mind in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about things spiritual and heavenly. So is it expressed in the verse foregoing. 'They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh;' they think on them, their contrivances are about them, and their desires after them. 'But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' They mind them by fixing their thoughts and meditations upon them.

2. The inclination, disposition, and frame of the mind, in all its affections, whereby it adheres and cleaves unto spiritual things. This minding of the Spirit resides habitually in the affections. Wherefore, the φρόνημα of the Spirit, or the mind as renewed and acted by a spiritual principle of light and life, is the exercise of its thoughts, meditations, and desires on spiritual things, proceeding from the love and delight of its affections in them, and engagement unto them.

3. A complacency of mind from that gust, relish, and savour which it finds in spiritual things, from their suitableness unto its constitution, inclinations, and desires. There is a salt in spiritual things, whereby they are condited and made savoury unto a renewed mind; though to others they are as the white of an egg, that hath no taste or savour in it. In this gust and relish lies the sweetness and satisfaction of spiritual life. Speculative notions about spiritual things, when they are alone, are dry, sapless, and barren. In this gust we taste by experience that God is gracious, and that the love of Christ is better than wine, or whatever else hath the most grateful relish unto a sensual appetite. This is the proper foundation of that 'joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.'

All these things do concur in the minding of the Spirit, or to constitute any person spiritually minded. And although the foundation of the whole duty included in it lies in the affections, and their immediate adherence unto spiritual things, whence the thoughts and meditations of the mind about them do proceed, yet I shall treat of the distinct parts of this duty in the order laid down, beginning with the exercise of our

thoughts and meditations about them. For they being the first genuine actings of the mind, according unto the prevalency of affections in it, they will make the best and most evident discovery of what nature the spring is from whence they do arise. And I shall not need to speak distinctly unto what is mentioned in the third place, concerning the complacency of the mind in what its affections are fixed on, for it will fall in with sundry other things that are to be spoken unto.

But before we do proceed, it is not amiss, as I suppose, to put a remark upon those important truths, which are directly contained in the words proposed as the foundation of the present discourse. As,

1. To be spiritually minded is the great distinguishing character of true believers from all unregenerate persons. As such is it here asserted by the apostle. All those who are carnally minded, who are in the flesh, they are unregenerate, they are not born of God, they please him not, nor can do so, but must perish for ever. But those who are spiritually minded are born of God, do live unto him, and shall come to the enjoyment of him. Hereon depends the trial and determination of what state we do belong unto.

2. Where any are spiritually minded, there, and there alone, is life and peace. What these are, wherein they do consist, what is their excellency and pre-eminence above all things in this world, how they are the effects and consequents of our being spiritually minded, shall be afterward declared.

There is neither of these considerations but is sufficient to demonstrate of how great concernment unto us it is to be spiritually minded, and diligently to inquire whether we are so or no.

It will therefore be no small advantage unto us, to have our souls and consciences always affected with, and in due subjection unto, the power of this truth, namely, that 'to be spiritually minded is life and peace;' whence it will follow, that whatever we may think otherwise, if we are not so, we have neither of them, neither life nor peace. It will, I say, be of use unto us, if we are affected with the power of it. For many greatly deceive themselves in hearing the word. They admit of sacred truths in their understanding, and assent unto them, but take not in the power of them on their

consciences, nor strictly judge of their state and condition by them, which proves their ruin. For hereby they seem to themselves to believe that, whereof in truth they believe not one syllable as they ought. They hear it, they understand it in the notion of it, they assent unto it, at least they do not contradict it, yea, they commend it oftentimes and approve of it. But yet they believe it not. For if they did they would judge themselves by it, and reckon on it, that it will be with them at the last day according as things are determined therein.

Or such persons are, as the apostle James declares, 'like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was;' James i. 23, 24. There is a representation made of them, their state and condition, unto them in the word; they behold it, and conclude that it is even so with them, as the word doth declare. But immediately their minds are filled with other thoughts, acted by other affections, taken up with other occasions, and they forget in a moment the representation made of themselves and their condition. Wherefore, all that I have to offer on this subject will be utterly lost, unless a firm persuasion hereof be fixed on our minds, unless we are under the power of it, that to be spiritually minded is life and peace; so that whatever our light and profession be, our knowledge or our duty, without this we have indeed no real interest in life and peace.

These things being premised, I shall more practically open the nature of this duty, and what is required unto this frame of spirit. To be spiritually minded may be considered either as unto the nature and essence of it, or as unto its degrees; for one may be so more than another, or the same person may be more so at one time than another. In the first way it is opposed unto being carnally minded; in the other unto being earthly minded.

'To be carnally minded is,' as the apostle speaks, 'death;' it is so every way; and they who are so are dead in trespasses and sins. This is opposed unto being spiritually minded as unto its nature or essence. Where a man, as unto the substance and being of the grace and duty intended, is not spiritually minded, he is carnally minded, that is, under the power of death spiritual, and obnoxious unto death

eternal. This is the principal foundation we proceed upon; whence we demonstrate the indispensable necessity of the frame of mind inquired after.

There are two ways wherein men are earthly minded. The one is absolute, when the love of earthly things is wholly predominant in the mind. This is not formally and properly to be carnally minded, which is of a larger extent. The one denomination is from the root and principle, namely, the flesh; the other from the object, or the things of the earth. The latter is a branch from the former, as its root. To be earthly minded, is an operation and effect of the carnal mind in one especial way and instance. And it is as exclusive of life and salvation as the carnal mind itself; Phil. iii. 19. 1 John ii. 16. This therefore is opposed unto the being of spiritual mindedness, no less than to be carnally minded is. When there is in any a love of earthly things that is predominant, whence a person may be rightly denominated to be earthly minded, he is not, nor can be, spiritually minded at all; he hath no interest in the frame of heart and spirit intended thereby. And thus it is evidently with the greatest part of them who are called Christians in the world, let them pretend what they will to the contrary.

Again; there is a being earthly minded, which consists in an inordinate affection unto the things of this world. It is that which is sinful, which ought to be mortified; yet it is not absolutely inconsistent with the substance and being of the grace inquired after. Some who are really and truly spiritually minded, yet may for a time, at least, be under such an inordinate affection unto, and care about, earthly things, that if not absolutely, yet comparatively, as unto what they ought to be and might be, they may be justly said to be earthly minded. They are so in respect of those degrees in being spiritually minded, which they ought to aim at and may attain unto. And where it is thus, this grace can never thrive or flourish, it can never advance unto any eminent degree.

This is the Zoar of many professors; that little one wherein they would be spared. Such an earthly mindedness as is wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded, as unto the state and condition which depends thereon, they would avoid. For this they know would be absolutely ex-

clusive of life and peace. They cannot but know that such a frame is as inconsistent with salvation as living in the vilest sin that any man can contract the guilt of. There are more ways of spiritual and eternal death than one, as well as of natural. All that die have not the plague; and all that perish eternally are not guilty of the same profligate sins. The covetous are excluded from the kingdom of God no less severely than fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, and thieves; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. But there is a degree in being earthly minded, which they suppose their interest, advantages, relations, and occasions of life do call for, which they would be a little indulged in; they may abide in such a frame without a disparagement of their profession. And the truth is, they have too many companions to fear an especial reflection on themselves. The multitude of the guilty take away the sense and shame of the guilt. But besides, they hope well that it is not inconsistent absolutely with being spiritually minded; only they cannot well deny but that it is contrary unto such degrees in that grace, such thriving in that duty, as is recommended unto them. They think well of others who are spiritually minded in an eminent degree. At least they do so as unto the thing itself in general; for when they come unto particular instances of this or that man, for the most part, they esteem what is beyond their own measure to be little better than pretence. But in general, to be spiritually minded in an eminent degree, they cannot but esteem it a thing excellent and desirable. But it is for them who are more at leisure than they are: their circumstances and occasions require them to satisfy themselves with an inferior measure.

To obviate such pretences, I shall insist on nothing in the declaration of this duty and the necessity of it, but what is incumbent on all that believe, and without which they have no grounds to assure their conscience before God. And at present in general I shall say, whoever he be, who doth not sincerely aim at the highest degree of being spiritually minded, which the means he enjoyeth would lead him unto, and which the light he hath received doth call for; who judgeth it necessary unto his present advantages, occasions, and circumstances, to rest in such measures or degrees of it as he cannot but know that they come short of what he ought

to aim at, and so doth not endeavour after completeness in the will of God herein, can have no satisfaction in his own mind; hath no unfailing grounds whereon to believe that he hath any thing at all of the reality of this grace in him. Such a person possibly may have life which accompanies the essence of this grace, but he cannot have peace which follows on its degree in a due improvement. And it is to be feared, that far the greatest number of them who satisfy themselves in this apprehension, willingly neglecting an endeavour after the farther degrees of this grace and growth in this duty, which their light or convictions, and the means they enjoy do suggest unto them, are indeed carnally minded, and every way obnoxious unto death.

CHAP. II.

A particular account of the nature of this grace and duty of being spiritually minded. How it is stated in, and evidenced by, our thoughts.

HAVING stated the general concernments of that frame of mind which is here recommended unto us, we may proceed to inquire more particularly into the nature of it, according unto the description before given, in distinct propositions. And we shall carry on both these intentions together; first, to shew, what it is, and wherein it doth consist; and then, how it doth evidence itself, so as that we may frame a right judgment whether it be in us or no. And we shall have no regard unto them, who either neglect or despise these things on any pretence whatever. For this is the word according unto which we shall all shortly be judged, 'To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Thoughts and meditations as proceeding from spiritual affections are the first things wherein this spiritual mindedness doth consist, and whereby it doth evidence itself. Our thoughts are like the blossoms on a tree in the spring. You may see a tree in the spring all covered with blossoms that nothing else of it appears. Multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing. Ofttimes where there are most blos-

soms there is least fruit. But yet there is no fruit, be it of what sort it will, good or bad, but it comes in and from some of those blossoms. The mind of man is covered with thoughts, as a tree with blossoms. Most of them fall off, vanish, and come to nothing, end in vanity; and sometimes where the mind doth most abound with them, there is the least fruit; the sap of the mind is wasted and consumed in them. Howbeit there is no fruit which actually we bring forth, be it good or bad, but it proceeds from some of these thoughts. Wherefore ordinarily these give the best and surest measure of the frame of men's minds. As a man 'thinketh in his heart, so is he;' Prov. xxiii. 7. In case of strong and violent temptations, the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object; for whether they are from Satan's suggestions, or from inward darkness, trouble, and horror, they will impose such a continual sense of themselves on the mind, as shall engage all its thoughts about them. As when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts run quite another way, than when he is in safety about his occasions. But ordinarily voluntary thoughts are the best measure and indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grass which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts; they are the original actings of the soul, the way whereby the heart puts forth and empties the treasure that is in it; the waters that first rise and flow from that fountain. Every man's heart is his treasury, and the treasure that is in it is either good or evil, as our Saviour tells us. There is a good and bad treasure of the heart; but whatever a man hath, be it good or evil, there it is; this treasure is opening, emptying, and spending itself continually, though it can never be exhausted; for it hath a fountain in nature or grace, which no expense can diminish, yea, it increaseth and getteth strength by it. The more you spend of the treasure of your hearts in any kind, the more will you abound in treasure of the same kind. Whether it be good or evil, it grows by expense and exercise, and the principal way whereby it puts forth itself, is by the thoughts of the mind; if the heart be evil, they are for the most part vain, filthy, corrupt, wicked, foolish; if it be under the power of a principle of grace, and so have a good

treasure in it, it puts forth itself by thoughts suitable unto its nature, and compliant with its inclinations.

Wherefore, these thoughts give the best measure of the frame of our minds and hearts, I mean such as are voluntary, such as the mind of its own accord is apt for, inclines and ordinarily betakes itself unto. Men may have a multitude of thoughts about the affairs of their callings and the occasions of life, which yet may give no due measure of the inward frame of their hearts; so men, whose calling and work it is to study the Scripture or the things revealed therein, and to preach them unto others, cannot but have many thoughts about spiritual things; and yet may be, and oftentimes are, most remote from being spiritually minded. They may be forced by their work and calling to think of them early and late, evening and morning; and yet their minds be no way rendered or proved spiritual thereby. It were well if all of us who are preachers would diligently examine ourselves herein. So is it with them who oblige themselves to read the Scriptures, it may be so many chapters every day; notwithstanding the diligent performance of their task, they may be most remote from being spiritually minded. See Ezek xxxiii. 31. But there is a certain track and course of thoughts that men ordinarily betake themselves unto, when not affected with present occasions. If these be vain, foolish, proud, ambitious, sensual, or filthy, such is the mind and its frame; if they be holy, spiritual, and heavenly, such may the frame of the mind be judged to be. But these things must be more fully explained.

It is the great character and description of the frame of men's minds in an unregenerate condition, or before the renovation of their natures, 'That every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil continually;' Gen. vi. 5. They are continually coining figments and imaginations in their hearts, stamping them into thoughts that are vain, foolish, and wicked. All other thoughts in them are occasional; these are the natural, genuine product of their hearts. Hence the clearest and sometimes first discovery of the bottomless evil treasure of filth, folly, and wickedness, that is in the heart of man by nature, is from the innumerable multitude of evil imaginations, which are there coined and thrust forth every day. So the wicked are said to be 'like the

troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;' Isa. lvii. 20. There is a fulness of evil in their hearts, like that of water in the sea; this fulness is troubled or put into continual motion by their lusts and impetuous desires. Hence the mire and dirt of evil thoughts are continually cast up in them.

It is therefore evident that the predominancy of voluntary thoughts is the best and most sure indication of the inward frame and state of the mind. For if it be so on the one side as unto the carnal mind, it is so on the other as unto the spiritual. Wherefore to be spiritually minded, in the first place, is to have the course and stream of those thoughts which we ordinarily retreat unto, which we approve of as suited unto our affections, to be about spiritual things. Therein consists the minding of the Spirit.

But because all men, unless horribly profligate, have thoughts about spiritual things, yet we know that all men are not spiritually minded, we must consider, what is required unto such thoughts, to render them a certain indication of the state of our minds. And there are these three things required hereunto.

1. That they be natural, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions. The psalmist mentions the inward thoughts of men, Psal. xlix. 11. lxiv. 6. But whereas all thoughts are the inward acts of the mind, it should seem that this expression makes no distinction of the especial kind of thoughts intended from those of another sort. But the difference is not in the formal nature of them, but in the causes, springs, and occasions. Inward thoughts are such as arise merely and solely from men's inward principles, dispositions, and inclinations, that are not suggested or excited by any outward objects. Such in wicked men are those actings of their lusts, whereby they entice and seduce themselves, James i. 14. Their lusts stir up thoughts leading and encouraging them to make provision for the flesh. These are their inward thoughts. Of the same nature are those thoughts which are the minding of the Spirit. They are the first natural egress and genuine acting of the habitual disposition of the mind and soul.

Thus in covetous men there are two sorts of thoughts, whereby their covetousness acts itself. First, such as are

occasioned by outward objects and opportunities. So it was with Achan, Josh. vii. 21. 'When,' saith he, 'I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them.' His sight of them, with an opportunity of possessing himself of them, excited covetous thoughts and desires in him. So is it with others every day, whose occasions call them to converse with the objects of their lusts. And some by such objects may be surprised into thoughts that their minds are not habitually inclined unto. And therefore, when they are known, it is our duty to avoid them. But the same sort of persons have thoughts of this nature arising from themselves only, their own dispositions and inclinations, without any outward provocations. 'The vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity;' Isa. xxxii. 6. And this he doth as the liberal deviseth liberal things, ver. 8. from his own disposition and inclination, he is contriving in his thoughts how to act according to them. So the unclean person hath two sorts of thoughts with respect unto the satisfaction of his lusts. First, such as are occasioned in his mind by the external objects of it. Hereunto stage plays, revellings, dancings, with the society of bold persons, persons of corrupt communication, do contribute their wicked service. For the avoidance of this snare, Job made a covenant with his eyes, chap. xxxi. 1. And our Saviour gives that holy declaration of the evil of it, Matt. v. 28. But he hath an habitual spring of these thoughts in himself, constantly inclining and disposing him thereunto. Hence the apostle Peter tells us that such persons 'have eyes full of an adulteress, that cannot cease from sin;' 2 Epist. ii. 14. Their own affections make them restless in their thoughts and contrivances about sin. So is it with them who are given to excess in wine or strong drink. They have pleasing thoughts raised in them from the object of their lust represented unto them. Hence Solomon gives that advice against the occasion of them, Prov. xxiii. 31. But it is their own habitual disposition which carries them unto pleasing thoughts of the satisfaction of their lusts, which he describes, ver. 34, 35. So is it in other cases. The thoughts of this latter sort, are men's inward thoughts; and such must these be of spiritual things, whence we may be esteemed spiritually minded.

Psal. xlv. 1. Saith the psalmist, 'My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king.' He was meditating on spiritual things, on the things of the person and kingdom of Christ. Hence his heart 'bubbled up' (as it is in the original) a good matter. It is an illusion taken from a quick spring of living waters: from its own life and fulness it bubbles up the water that runs and flows from it. So is it with these thoughts in them that are spiritually minded. There is a living fulness of spiritual things in their minds and affections, that springeth up into holy thoughts about them.

From hence doth our Saviour give us the great description of spiritual life. It is 'a well of living water springing up into everlasting life;' John. iv.12. The Spirit, with his graces residing in the heart of a believer, are a well of living water. Nor is it such a well as, content with its own fulness, doth not of its own accord, without any instrument or pains in drawing, send out its refreshing waters, as it is with most wells though of living water. For this is spoken by our Saviour in answer and opposition unto that objection of the woman, upon this mention of giving living water, ver. 10. 'Sir,' saith she, 'thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, whence wilt thou have this water?' ver. 11. True, saith he, such is the nature of this well and water, dead earthly things. They are of no use unless we have instruments, lines, and buckets to draw withal. But the living water which I shall give is of another nature. It is not water to be kept in a pit or cistern without us, whence it must be drawn; but it is within us, and that not dead and useless, but continually springing up unto the use and refreshment of them that have it. For so is it with the principle of the new creature, of the new nature, the Spirit and his graces in the hearts of them that do believe. It doth of itself and from itself, without any external influence on it, incline and dispose the whole soul unto spiritual actings that tend unto eternal life. Such are the thoughts of them that are spiritually minded. They arise from the inward principle, inclination, and disposition of the soul, are the bubblings of this well of living water; they are the mindings of the Spirit.

So our Saviour describes them, Matt. xii. 35. 'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth

good things.' First, the man is good; as he said before, make the tree good, or the fruit cannot be good, ver. 33. He is made so by grace in the change and renovation of his nature; for in ourselves we are every way evil. This good man hath a treasure in his heart. So all men have; as the next words are, 'the evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart.' And this is the great difference that is between men in this world. Every man hath a treasure in his heart; that is, a prevailing inexhaustible principle of all his actings and operations. But in some this treasure is good, in others it is evil; that is, the prevailing principle in the heart, which carries along with it its dispositions and inclinations, is in some good and gracious, in others it is evil. Out of this good treasure, a good man bringeth forth good things. The first opening of it, the first bringing of it forth, is by these thoughts. The thoughts that arise out of the heart are of the same nature with the treasure that is in it. If the thoughts that naturally arise and spring up in us, are for the most part vain, foolish, sensual, earthly, selfish, such is the treasure that is in our hearts, and such are we. But where the thoughts that thus naturally proceed from the treasure that is in the heart, are spiritual and holy, it is an argument that we are spiritually minded.

Where it is not thus with our thoughts, they give no such evidence as that inquired after. Men may have thoughts of spiritual things, and that many of them, and that frequently, which do not arise from this principle, but may be resolved into two other causes. 1. Inward force; 2. Outward occasions.

1. Inward force, as it may be called. This is by convictions. Convictions put a kind of a force upon the mind, or an impression that causeth it to act contrary unto its own habitual disposition and inclination. It is in the nature of water to descend. But apply an instrument unto it that shall make a compression of it and force it unto a vent, it will fly upwards vehemently, as if that were its natural motion. But so soon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately unto its own proper tendency, descending towards its centre. So is it with men's thoughts ofttimes. They are earthly, their natural course and motion is downwards unto the earth and the things thereof. But when any efficacious conviction presseth on the mind, it

forceth the egress of its thoughts upwards towards heavenly things. It will think much and frequently of them; as if that were their proper motion and course. But so soon as the power of conviction decays or wears off, that the mind is no more sensible of its force and impression, the thoughts of it return again unto their old course and track, as the water tends downwards.

This state and frame is graphically described, Psal. lxxviii. 34—37. 'When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' Men in troubles, dangers, sickness, fears of death, or under effectual conviction of sin from the preaching of the word, will endeavour to think and meditate on spiritual things. Yea, they will be greatly troubled that they cannot think of them more than they do, and esteem it their folly that they think of any thing else. But as freedom and deliverance do approach, so these thoughts decay and disappear. The mind will not be compelled to give place unto them any more. The prophet gives the reason of it, Jer. xiii. 23. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed do to evil.' They have had another haunt, been taught another course, the habit and inclination of the mind lies another way, and they will no longer tend towards spiritual things, than an impression is on them from their convictions.

And it is an argument of very mean attainments, of a low and weak degree in this frame of heart, or in our being spiritually minded, when our thoughts of spiritual things do rise or fall according unto renewed occasional convictions. If when we are under rebukes from God in our persons or relations, in fears of death and the like, and withal have some renewed convictions of sin, in commission or omission of duties, and thereon do endeavour to be more spiritually minded in the constant exercise of our thoughts on spiritual things, which we fail in; and these thoughts decay as our convictions in the causes of them do wear off or are removed,

we have attained a very low degree in this grace, if we have any interest in it at all.

Water that ariseth and floweth from a living spring runneth equally and constantly, unless it be obstructed or diverted by some violent opposition; but that which is from thunder-showers runs furiously for a season, but is quickly dried up. So are those spiritual thoughts which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace in the heart; they are even and constant, unless an interruption be put upon them for a season by temptations. But those which are excited by the thunder of convictions, however their streams may be filled for a season, they quickly dry up and utterly decay.

2. Such thoughts may arise in the minds of men not spiritually minded from outward means and occasions. Such I intend as are indeed useful, yea appointed of God for this end among others, that they may ingenerate and stir up holy thoughts and affections in us. But there is a difference in their use and operation. In some they excite the inward principle of the mind to act in holy thoughts according unto its own sanctified disposition and prevalent affections. This is their proper end and use. In others they occasionally suggest such thoughts unto the minds of men, which spring only from the notions of the things proposed unto them. With respect unto this end also, they are of singular use unto the souls of men, howbeit such thoughts do not prove men to be spiritually minded. Where you till and manure your land, if it brings forth plentiful crops of corn, it is an evidence that the soil itself is good and fertile; the dressing of it only gives occasion and advantage to put forth its own fruit-bearing virtue. But if in the tilling of land, you lay much dung upon it, and it brings forth here and there a handful where the dung lay; you will say, the soil is barren, it brings forth nothing of itself. These means that we shall treat of, are as the tilling of a fruitful soil, which help it in bringing forth its fruit, by exciting its own virtue and power. They stir up holy affections unto holy thoughts and desires. But in others, whose hearts are barren, they only serve, as it were, some of them here and there, to stir up spiritual thoughts, which gives no evidence of a gracious heart or spirit. But because

this is a matter of great importance, it shall be handled distinctly by itself.

CHAP. III.

Outward means and occasions of thoughts of such spiritual things, which do not prove men to be spiritually minded. Preaching of the word. Exercise of gifts. Prayer. How we may know whether our thoughts of spiritual things in prayer are truly spiritual thoughts, proving us to be spiritually minded.

First, Such a means is the preaching of the word itself. It is observed concerning many in the gospel, that they heard it willingly, received it with joy, and did many things gladly, upon the preaching of it. And we see the same thing exemplified in multitudes every day. But none of these things can be without many thoughts in the minds of such persons, about the spiritual things of the word. For they are the effects of such thoughts, and being wrought in the minds of men, will produce more of the same nature. Yet were they all hypocrites, concerning whom these things are spoken, and were never spiritually minded.

The cause of this miscarriage is given us by our Saviour, Matt. xiii. 20, 21. 'He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon receiveth it with joy; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while.' The good thoughts they have, proceed not from any principle in themselves. Neither their affections nor their thoughts of these things, have any internal root whereon they should grow. So is it with many who live under the present dispensation of the gospel. They have thoughts of spiritual things continually suggested unto them; and they do abide with them more or less according as they are affected. For I speak not of them who are either despisers of what they hear, or way-side hearers, who understand nothing of what they hear, and immediately lose all sense of it, all thoughts about it. But I speak of them who attend with some diligence, and receive the word with some joy. These insensibly grow in know-

ledge and understanding, and therefore cannot be without some thoughts of spiritual things. Howbeit for the most part they are, as was said, but like unto waters that run after a shower of rain. They pour out themselves as if they proceeded from some strong living spring, whereas indeed they have none at all. When once the waters of the shower are spent, their channel is dry, there is nothing in it but stones and dirt. When the doctrine of the word falls on such persons as showers of rain, it gives a course, sometimes greater sometimes less, unto their thoughts towards spiritual things. But they have not a well of water in them springing up into everlasting life. Wherefore, after awhile their minds are dried up from such thoughts; nothing remains in them but earth, and that perhaps foul and dirty.

It must be observed, that the best of men, the most holy and spiritually minded, may have, nay ought to have, their thoughts of spiritual things excited, multiplied, and confirmed, by the preaching of the word. It is one end of its dispensation, one principal use of it in them by whom it is received. And it hath this effect two ways. 1. As it is the spiritual food of the soul, whereby its principle of life and grace is maintained and strengthened. The more this is done, the more shall we thrive in being spiritually minded. 2. As it administereth occasion unto the exercise of grace. For proposing the proper object of faith, love, fear, trust, reverence unto the soul, it draws forth all those graces into exercise. Wherefore, although the vigorous actings of spiritual thoughts be occasional from the word, be more under and after the preaching of it, than at other times, it is no more but what ariseth from the nature and use of the ordinance, by God's own appointment, nor is it any evidence that those with whom it is so are not spiritually minded; but on the contrary that they are. Yet where men have no other thoughts of this matter but what are occasioned by the outward dispensation of the word, such thoughts do not prove them to be spiritually minded. Their endeavours in them are like those of men in a dream. Under some oppression of their spirits, their imagination fixeth on some thing or other, that is most earnestly to be desired or avoided. Herein they seem to themselves to

strive with all their might, to endeavour to go, run or contend, but all in vain; every thing fails them, and they are not relieved until they are awaked. So such persons in impressions they receive from the word, seem to strive and contend in their thoughts and resolutions to comply with what is proposed unto them; but their strength fails, they find no success for want of a principle of spiritual life, and after a time give over their endeavours until they are occasionally renewed again. Now the thoughts which in the dispensation of the word do proceed from an inward principle of grace excited unto its due exercise, are distinguishable from them which are only occasionally suggested unto the mind by the word outwardly preached. For, 1. They are especial actings of faith and love towards the things themselves that are preached. They belong unto our receiving the truth in the love thereof. And love respects the goodness of the things themselves, and not merely the truth of the propositions wherein they are expressed. The other thoughts are only the sense of the mind as affected with light and truth, without any cordial love unto the things themselves. 2. They are accompanied with complacency of soul arising from love, experience, more or less, of the power of them, and their suitableness unto the new nature or principle of grace in them. For when our minds find that so indeed it is in us, as it is in the word; that this is that which we would be more conformable unto; it gives a secret complacency with satisfaction unto the soul. The other thoughts which are only occasional, have none of these concomitants or effects, but are dry and barren, unless it be in a few words or transient discourse. 3. The former are means of spiritual growth. So some say the natural growth of vegetables is not by insensible motion, but by gusts and sensible eruptions of increase. These are both in spiritual growth, and the latter consists much in those thoughts which the principle of the new nature is excited unto by the word in the latter.

2. The duty of prayer is another means of the like nature. One principal end of it is to excite, stir up, and draw forth the principle of grace, of faith and love in the heart, unto a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things, with affections suitable unto them. Those who de-

sign not this end in prayer, know not at all what it is to pray. Now all sorts of persons have frequent occasion to join with others in prayer, and many are under the conviction that it is their own duty to pray every day, it may be in their families and otherwise. And it is hard to conceive how men can constantly join with others in prayer, much more how they can pray themselves, but that they must have thoughts of spiritual things every day; howbeit it is possible that they may have no root, or living spring of them in themselves, but they are only occasional impressions on their minds from the outward performance of the duty. I shall give some instances of the grounds hereof, which on many reasons require our diligent consideration.

Spiritual thoughts may be raised in a person in his own duty, by the exercise of his gifts, when there is no acting of grace in them at all. For they lead and guide the mind unto such things as are the matter of prayer; that is, spiritual things. Gifts are nothing but a spiritual improvement of our natural faculties or abilities. And a man cannot speak or utter any thing but what proceeds from his rational faculties by invention or memory, or both, managed in and by his thoughts, unless he speak by rote, and that which is not rational. What therefore proceeds from a man's rational faculty in and by the exercise of his gifts, that his thoughts must be exercised about.

A man may read a long prayer that expresseth spiritual things, and yet never have one spiritual thought arise in his mind about them. For there is no exercise of any faculty of his mind required unto such reading, but only to attend unto the words that are to be read. This I say may be so, I do not say that it is always so, or that it must be so. But as was said in the exercise of gifts, it is impossible but there must be an exercise of reason, by invention, judgment, and memory; and consequently, thoughts of spiritual things. Yet may they all be merely occasional from the present external performance of the duty, without any living spring or exercise of grace. In such a course may men of tolerable gifts continue all their days, unto the satisfaction of themselves and others, deceiving both them and their own souls.

This being evident from the Scripture and experience, an inquiry may be made thereon, as unto our own concernment in these things; especially of those who have received spiritual gifts of their own, and of them also in some degree, who usually enjoy the gifts of others in this duty. For it may be asked, how we shall know whether the thoughts which we have of spiritual things in and upon prayer do arise from gifts only, those of our own or other men's, giving occasion unto them, or are influenced from a living principle and spring of grace in our hearts. A case this is (however by some it may be apprehended) of great importance, and which would require much time fully to resolve. For there is nothing whereby the refined sort of hypocrites do more deceive themselves and others, nothing whereby some men do give themselves more countenance in an indulgence unto their lusts, than by this part of the form of godliness, when they deny the power thereof. And besides, it is that wherein the best of believers ought to keep a diligent watch over themselves, in every particular instance of the performance of this duty. With respect hereunto, in an especial manner, are they to watch unto prayer. If they are at any time negligent herein, they may rest in a bare exercise of gifts, when on a due examination and trial, they have no evidence of the acting of grace in what they have done. I shall, therefore, with what brevity I can, give a resolution unto this inquiry. And to this end observe,

1. It is an ancient complaint, that spiritual things are filled with great obscurity and difficulty; and it is true. Not that there is any such thing in themselves, for they all come forth from the Father of lights, and are full of light, order, beauty, and wisdom. And light and order are the only means whereby any thing makes a discovery of itself. But the ground of all darkness and difficulty in these things lies in ourselves. We can more clearly and steadily see and behold the moon and the stars, than we can the sun when it shines in its greatest lustre. It is not because there is more light in the moon and stars than in the sun, but because the light of the sun is greater than our visive faculty can directly bear and behold. So we can more clearly discover the truth and distinct nature of things,

moral and natural, than we can of things that are heavenly and spiritual. See John iii. 14. Not that there is more substance or reality in them, but because the ability of our understanding is more suited unto the comprehension of them. The other are above us. We know but in part, and our minds are liable to be hindered and disordered in their apprehension of things heavenly and spiritual, by ignorance, temptations, and prejudices of all sorts. In nothing more are men subject unto mistakes than in the application of things unto themselves, and a judgment of their interest in them. Fear, self-love, with the prevalency of temptations and corruptions, do all engage their powers to darken the light of the mind and to pervert its judgment. In no case doth the deceitfulness of the heart, or of sin, which is all one, more act itself. Hence multitudes say peace to themselves, to whom God doth not speak peace; and some who are children of light do yet walk in darkness. Hence is that fervent prayer of the apostle for help in this case, Ephes. i. 16—19. There is also a great similitude between temporary faith, and that which is saving and durable; and between gifts and graces in their operations, which is that that is under present consideration. It is acknowledged, therefore, that without the especial light and conduct of the Spirit of God, no man can make such a judgment of his state and his actions, as shall be a stable foundation of giving glory to God, and of obtaining peace unto his own soul. And therefore the greatest part of mankind do constantly deceive themselves in these things.

But ordinarily, under this blessed conduct in the search of ourselves and the concernments of our duty, we may come unto a satisfaction whether they are influenced by faith and have grace exercised in them, especially this duty of prayer, or whether it derive from the power of our natural faculties, raised by light and spiritual gifts only; and so whether our spiritual thoughts therein do spring from a vital principle of grace, or whether they come from occasional impressions on the mind, by the performance of the duty itself.

If men are willing to deceive themselves, or to hide themselves from themselves, to walk with God at all peradventures, to leave all things at hazard, to put off all trials unto

that at the last day, and so never call themselves unto an account as unto the nature of their duties in any particular instance, it is no wonder, if they neither do nor can make any distinction in this matter as unto the true nature of their thoughts in spiritual duties. Two things are required hereunto.

1. That we impartially and severely examine and try the frames and actings of our minds in holy duties by the word of truth; and thereon not be afraid to speak that plainly unto our souls which the word speaks unto us. This diligent search ought to respect our principles, aims, ends, actings, with the whole deportment of our souls in every duty. See 2 Cor. xiii. 5. If a man receiveth much money, and look only on the outward form and superscription, when he supposeth that he hath great store of current coin in gold and silver, he may have only heaps of lead or copper by him. But he that trades in it as the comfort and support of his natural life and condition, he will try what he receives both by the balance and the touchstone, as the occasion requires, especially if it be in a time when much adulterated coin is passant in the world. And if a man reckons on his duties by tale and number, he may be utterly deceived; and be spiritually poor and a bankrupt, when he esteems himself rich, increased in goods, and wanting nothing. Some duties may appearingly hold in the balance as to weight, which will not hold it at the touchstone as to worth. Both means are to be used if we would not be mistaken in our accounts. Thus God himself, in the midst of a multitude of duties, calls the people to try and examine themselves, whether or no they are such as have faith and grace in them, and so like to have acceptance with him. Isa. lviii. 2—5.

2. Add we must unto our own diligent inquiry fervent prayers unto God, that he would search and try us, as unto our sincerity, and discover unto us the true frame of our hearts. Hereof we have an express example, Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' This is the only way whereby we may have the Spirit of God witnessing unto our sincerity, with our own spirits. There

is need of calling in divine assistance in this matter, both from the importance of it, and from its difficulty; God alone knowing fully and perfectly, what is in the hearts of men.

I no way doubt but that in the impartial use of these means, a man may come to assured satisfaction in his own mind, such as wherein he shall not be deceived, whether he doth animate and quicken his thoughts of spiritual things in duties with inward vital grace, or whether they are impressions on his mind, by the occasion of the duty.

A duty this is of great importance and necessity, now hypocrisy hath made so great an inroad on profession, and gifts have deflowered grace in its principal operations. No persons are in greater danger of walking at hazard with God, than those who live in the exercise of spiritual gifts in duties, unto their own satisfaction and others. For they may countenance themselves with an appearance of every thing that should be in them in reality and power, when there is nothing of it in them. And so it hath fallen out. We have seen many earnest in the exercise of this gift, who have turned vile and debauched apostates. Some have been known to live in sin and an indulgence of their lusts, and yet to abide constant in their duties. Isa. i. 15. And we may hear prayers sometimes that openly discover themselves unto spiritual sense, to be the labour of the brain, by the help of gifts in memory and invention, without an evidence of any mixture of humility, reverence, or godly fear; without any acting of faith and love. They flow as wine, yet smell and taste of the unsavoury cask from whence they proceed. It is necessary therefore that we should put ourselves on the severest trial, lest we should be found not to be spiritually minded in spiritual duties.

Gifts are gracious vouchsafements of Christ to make grace useful unto ourselves and others; yea, they may make them useful unto the grace of others, who have no grace in themselves. But as unto our own souls they are of no other advantage or benefit but to stir up grace unto its proper exercise; and to be a vehicle to carry it on, in its proper use. If we do not always regard this in their exercise, we had better be without them. If instead hereof, they once begin to impose themselves practically upon us,

so as that we rest in spiritual light acting our inventions, memories, and judgments, with a ready utterance, or such as it is, there is no form of prayer can be more prejudicial unto our souls. As wine, if taken moderately and seasonably, helps the stomach in digestion, and quickens the natural spirits, enabling the powers of nature unto their duty, is useful and helpful unto it, but if it be taken in excess, it doth not help nature, but oppress it, and takes on itself to do what nature should be assisted unto; it fills men's carcases with diseases as well as their souls with sin. So whilst spiritual gifts are used and employed only to excite, aid, and assist grace in its operations, they are unutterably useful. But if they put themselves in the room thereof, to do all that grace should do; they are hurtful and pernicious. We have need therefore to be very diligent in this inquiry, whether our spiritual thoughts, even in our prayers, be not rather occasioned from the duty, than spring from a gracious principle in our hearts, or are the actings of real saving grace.

2. Where thoughts of spiritual things in prayer are occasional only in the way before described, such prayers will not be a means of spiritual growth unto the soul. They will not make the soul humble, holy, watchful, and diligent in universal obedience. Grace will not thrive under the greatest constancy in such duties. It is an astonishing thing to see how under frequency of prayer, and a seeming fervency therein, many of us are at a stand as to visible thriving in the fruits of grace; and it is to be feared without any increase of strength in the root of it. 'God's hand is not shortened that he cannot save, nor his ear deafened that he cannot hear.' He is the same as in the days of old, when our fathers cried unto him and were delivered, when they trusted in him and were not confounded. 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Prayer is the same that it was, and shall lose nothing of its prevalency whilst this world endureth. Whence is it then that there is so much prayer amongst us, and so little success? I speak not with respect unto the outward dispensations of divine providence in afflictions or persecutions, wherein God always acts in a way of sovereignty, and oftimes gives the most useful answer unto our prayers by

denying our requests. I intend that only whereof the psalmist giveth us his experience, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. 'In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' Where prayers are effectual, they will bring in spiritual strength. But the prayers of many seem to be very spiritual, and to express all conceivable supplies of grace; and they are persisted in with constancy. And God forbid we should judge them to be hypocritical and wholly insincere. Yet there is a defect somewhere, which should be inquired after. For they are not so answered, as that they who pray them, are strengthened with strength in their souls. There is not that spiritual thriving, that growth in grace, which might be expected to accompany such supplications.

I know that a man may pray often, pray sincerely and frequently, for an especial mercy, grace, or deliverance from a particular temptation, and yet no spiritual supply of strength unto his own experience come in thereby. So Paul prayed thrice for the removal of his temptation, and yet had the exercise of it continued. In such a case there may be no defect in prayer, and yet the grace in particular aimed at not be attained. For God hath other holy ends to accomplish hereby on the soul. But how persons should continue in prayer in general, according to the mind of God, so far as can be outwardly discovered, and yet thrive not at all, as unto spiritual strength in their souls, is hard to be understood.

And, which is yet more astonishable, men abide in the duty of prayer, and that in constancy, in their families and otherwise, and yet live in known sins. Whatever spiritual thoughts such men have in and by their prayers, they are not spiritually minded. Shall we now say that all such persons are gross hypocrites; such as know they do but mock God and man; know that they have not desires nor aims after the things which they mention in their own prayers; but do these things either for some corrupt end, or at best to satisfy their convictions? Could we thus resolve, the whole difficulty of the case were taken off. For such double minded men have no reason to think 'that they shall receive any thing of the Lord,' as James speaks, chap. i. 7. Indeed they do not. They never act faith with reference unto their

owa prayers. But it is not so with all of this sort. Some judge themselves sincere and in good earnest in their prayers, not without some hopes and expectations of success. I will not say of all such persons, that they are among the number of them concerning whom the wisdom of God says, 'Because I called unto them, and they refused; they shall call on me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, and shall not find me;' Prov. i. 18—21. And although we may say unto such persons in general, Either leave your sinning, or leave your praying, from Psal. l. 16, 17. and that with respect unto present scandal, and certain miscarriage in the end, if both be continued in; yet in particular I would not advise any such person to leave off his praying until he had left his sin. This were to advise a sick man to use no remedies until he were well cured. Who knows but that the Holy Spirit, who works when and how he pleaseth, may take a time to animate these lifeless prayers, and make them a means of deliverance from the power of this sin. In the mean time the fault and guilt is wholly their own, who have effected a consistency between a way in sinning and a course in praying. And it ariseth from hence, that they have never laboured to fill up their requests with grace. What there hath been of earnestness or diligence in them, hath been from a force put upon them by their convictions and fears. For no man was ever absolutely prevailed on by sin, who prayed for deliverance according to the mind of God. Every praying man that perisheth was a hypocrite. The faithfulness of God in his promises will not allow us to judge otherwise. Wherefore, the thoughts that such persons have of spiritual things even in their duties, do not arise from within, nor are a natural emanation of, the frames of their hearts and affections.

3. Earnestness and appearing fervency in prayer, as unto the outward delivery of the words of it, yea, though the mind be so affected as to contribute much thereunto, will not of themselves prove, that the thoughts of men therein do arise from an internal spring of grace. There is a fervency of spirit in prayer, that is one of the best properties of it, being an earnest acting of love, faith, and desire. But there is a fervency wherewith the mind itself may be affected, that may arise from other causes.

1. It may do so from the engagement of natural affections unto the object of their prayer, or the things prayed for. Men may be mighty earnest and intent in their minds, in praying for a dear relation, or for deliverance from eminent troubles or imminent dangers; and yet all this fervour arise from the vehement actings of natural affections about the things prayed for, excited in an especial manner by the present duty. Hence God calls the earnest cries of some for temporal things, not a 'crying unto him,' but 'a howling,' Hos. vii. 14. that is, the cry of hungry ravenous beasts, that would be satisfied.

2. Sometimes it ariseth from the sharpness of convictions, which will make men even 'roar in their prayers for disquietment of heart.' And this may be where there is no true grace as yet received, nor, it may be, ever will be so. For the perplexing work of convictions goes before real conversion; and as it produceth many other effects and changes in the mind, so it may do this of great fervency in vocal prayers, especially if it be accompanied with outward afflictions, pains, or troubles; Psal. lxxviii. 34, 35.

3. Ofttimes the mind and affections are very little concerned in that fervour and earnestness which appear in the outward performance of the duty. But in the exercise of gifts, and through their own utterance, men put their natural affections into such an agitation as shall carry them out into a great vehemency in their expressions. It hath been so with sundry persons, who have been discovered to be rotten hypocrites, and have afterward turned cursed apostates. Wherefore, all these things may be, where there is no gracious spring or vital principle acting itself from within in spiritual thoughts.

Some, it may be, will design an advantage by their conceptions unto the interest of profaneness and scoffing. For if there may be these evils under the exercise of the gift of prayer, both in constancy and with fervency; if there may be a total want of the exercise of all true grace with it and under it; then, it may be, all that is pretended of this gift and its use, is but hypocrisy and talk. But I say, 1. It may be as well pretended, that because the sun shining on a dunghill doth occasion offensive and noisome steams, therefore all at this pretended of its influence on spices and

flowers, causing them to give out their fragrancy, is utterly false. No man ever thought that spiritual gifts did change or renew the minds and natures of men: where they are alone, they only help and assist unto the useful exercise of natural faculties and powers. And therefore, where the heart is not savingly renewed, no gifts can stir up a saving exercise of faith. But where it is so, they are a means to cause the savour of it to flow forth. 2. Be it so that there may be some evils found under the exercise of the gift of prayer, what remedy for them may be proposed? Is it that men should renounce their use of it, and betake themselves unto the reading of prayers only? 1. The same may be said of all spiritual gifts whatever, for they are all of them liable unto abuse. And shall we reject all the powers of the world to come, the whole complex of gospel gifts for the communication whereof the Lord Christ hath promised to continue his Spirit with his church unto the end of the world, because by some they are abused? 2. Not only the same, but far greater evils may be found in and under the reading of prayers, which needs no farther demonstration than what it gives of itself every day. 3. It is hard to understand, how any benefit at all can accrue unto any by this relief, when the advantages of the other way are evident.

Wherefore the inquiry remains, How we may know unto our own satisfaction, that the thoughts we have of spiritual things in the duty of prayer, are from an internal fountain of grace, and so are an evidence that we are spiritually minded, whereunto all these things do tend. Some few things I shall offer towards satisfaction herein.

1. I take it for granted, on the evidence before given, that persons who have any spiritual light, and will diligently examine and try their own hearts, will be able to discern what real actings of faith, of love, and delight in God, there are in their duties; and consequently, what is the spring of their spiritual thoughts. In general we are assured, that 'he that believeth, hath the witness in himself;' 1 John v. 10. Sincere faith will be its own evidence. And where there are sincere actings of faith, they will evidence themselves, if we try all things impartially by the word. But if men do, as for the most part they do, content themselves with the performance of any duty, without an ex-

amination of their principles, frames, and actings of grace in them, it is no wonder if they walk in all uncertainty.

2. When the soul finds a sweet spiritual complacency in and after its duties, it is an evidence that grace hath been acted in its spiritual thoughts and desires. Jer. xxxi. the prophet receiveth a long gracious message from God, filled up with excellent promises and pathetical exhortations unto the church. The whole is as it were summed up in the close of it, ver. 25. 'For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.' Whereon the prophet adds, 'Upon this I awaked, and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me.' God's gracious message had so composed his spirits, and freed his mind from trouble, as that he was at quiet repose in himself, like a man asleep. But after the end of it, he stirs up himself unto a review and consideration of what had been spoken unto him: 'I awaked and beheld,' or I stirred up myself, and considered what had been delivered unto me; and, saith he, 'my sleep was sweet unto me;' I found a gracious complacency in, and refreshment unto, my soul, from what I had heard and received. So is it ofttimes with a soul that hath had real communion with God in the duty of prayer. It finds itself both in it, and afterward when it is awakened unto the consideration of it, spiritually refreshed, it is sweet unto him.

This holy complacency, this rest and sweet repose of mind, is the foundation of the delight of believers in this duty. They do not pray only because it is their duty so to do, nor yet because they stand in need of it, so as that they cannot live without it, but they have delight in it; and to keep them from it, is all one as to keep them from their daily food and refreshment. Now we can have no delight in any thing but what we have found some sweetness, rest, and complacency in. Without any such experience we may do or use any thing, but cannot do it with delight. And it ariseth, 1. From the approach that is made unto God therein. It is in its own nature an access unto God on a throne of grace; Ephes. ii. 18. Heb. x. 19, 20. And when this access is animated by the actings of grace, the soul hath a spiritual experience of a nearness in that approach. Now God is the fountain and centre of all spiritual refreshment,

rest, and complacency: and in such an access unto him, there is a refreshing taste of them communicated unto the soul. Psal. xxxvi. 7—9. 'How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light we shall see light.' God is proposed in the excellency of his loving kindness, which is comprehensive of his goodness, grace, and mercy. And so he is also as the spring of life and light, all spiritual powers and joys. Those that believe, are described by their 'trust under the shadow of his wings.' In his worship, the fatness of his house, they make their approaches unto him. And the fruit hereof is, that he makes them to 'drink of the river of his pleasures,' the satisfying, refreshing streams of his grace and goodness; they approach unto him as unto the 'fountain of life,' so as to drink of that fountain, in renewed communications of life and grace; and in the light of God, the light of his countenance, to 'see light,' in satisfying joy. In these things doth consist, and from them doth arise, that spiritual complacency which the souls of believers do find in their duties. 2. From the due exercise of faith, love, and delight, the graces wherein the life of the new creature doth principally consist. There is a suitableness unto our natural constitution, and a secret complacency of our natures in the proper actings of life natural, for its own preservation and increase. There is so in in our spiritual constitution, in the proper actings of the powers of our spiritual life unto its preservation and increase. These graces, in their due exercise, do compose and refresh the mind, as those which are perfective of its state, which quell and cast out whatever troubles it. Thence a blessed satisfaction and complacency befalls the soul. Herein 'he that believeth hath the witness in himself.' Besides, faith and love are never really acted on Christ, but they prepare and make meet the soul to receive communications of love and grace from him; which it never faileth of, although it be not always sensible thereof. 3. From the testimony of conscience, bearing witness unto our sincerity, both in aims, ends, and performances of the duty.

Hence a gracious repose of mind and great satisfactoriness doth ensue.

If we have no experience of these things, it is evident that we walk at random in the best of our duties; for they are among the principal things that we do or ought to pray for. And if we have not experience of the effects of our prayers in our hearts, we neither have advantage by them, nor give glory unto God in them.

But yet here, as in most other spiritual things, one of the worst of vices is ready to impose itself in the room and place of the best of our graces. And this is, self-pleasing in the performance of the duty. This instead of a grace steeped in humility, as all true grace is, is a vile effect of spiritual pride, or the offering of a sacrifice unto our own net and drag. It is a glorying in the flesh; for whatever of self any doth glory in, it is but flesh. When men have had enlargements in their expressions, and especially when they apprehend that others are satisfied or affected therewith, they are apt to have a secret self-pleasing in what they have done, which before they are aware turns into pride and a noxious elation of mind. The same may befall men in their most secret duties, performed outwardly by the aid of spiritual gifts. But this is most remote from, and contrary unto, that spiritual complacency in duty which we speak of, which yet it will pretend unto, until it be diligently examined. The language of the spiritual complacency is, 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, of thine only;' Psal. lxxi. 16. That of spiritual pride is, 'God I thank thee that I have done thus and thus;' as it was expressed by the Pharisee. That is in God alone, this is in self. That draws forth the savour of all graces: this immediately covereth and buries them all, if there be any in the soul. That fills the soul eminently with humility and self-abasement; this with a lifting up of the mind, and proud self-conceit. That casts out all remembrance of what we have done ourselves, retaining only a sense of what we have received from God, of the impressions of his love and grace. This blots out all remembrance of what we have freely received from God, and retains only what we have done ourselves. Wherever it is, there is no due sense either of the greatness or goodness of God.

Some, it may be, will say that if it be so, they, for their parts are cut off. They have no experience of any such spiritual rest and complacency in God, in or after their prayers. At the best they begin them with tears and end them with sorrow; and sometimes they know not what is become of them, but fear that God is not glorified by them, nor their own souls bettered.

I answer, 1. There is great spiritual refreshment in that godly sorrow which is at work in our prayers. Where the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of grace and supplication, he causeth mourning, and in that mourning there is joy. 2. The secret encouragement which we receive by praying, to adhere unto God constantly in prayer, ariseth from some experience of this holy complacency, though we have not a sensible evidence of it. 3. Perhaps some of them who make this complaint, if they would awaken and consider, will find that their souls, at least sometimes, have been thus refreshed, and brought unto a holy rest in God. 4. Then shall you know the Lord, if you follow on to know him. Abide in seeking after this complacency and satisfaction in God, and you shall attain it.

3. It is a sure evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things in our supplications are from an internal spring of grace, and are not merely occasioned by the duty itself, when we find the daily fruit and advantage of them; especially in the preservation of our souls in a holy, humble, watchful frame.

Innumerable are the advantages, benefits, and effects of prayer, which are commonly spoken unto. Growth in grace and consolation is the substance of them. Where there is continuance in prayer, there will be spiritual growth in some proportion. For men to be earnest in prayer and thriftless in grace, is a certain indication of prevalent corruptions and want of being spiritually minded in prayer itself. If a man eats his daily food, let him eat never so much or so often, if he be not nourished by it, his body is under the power of prevalent distempers. And so is his spiritual constitution, who thriveth not in the use of the food of the new creature. But that which I fix upon with respect unto the present inquiry, is the frame that it preserves the soul in. It will keep it humble and upon a diligent watch as unto its dispositions

and actings. He who prays as he ought, will endeavour to live as he prays. This none can do who doth not with diligence keep his heart unto the things he hath prayed about. To pray earnestly and live carelessly, is to proclaim that a man is not spiritually minded in his prayer. Hereby then we shall know what is the spring of those spiritual thoughts which our minds are exercised withal in our supplications. If they are influenced unto a constant daily watch for the preservation of that frame of spirit, those dispositions and inclinations unto spiritual things which we pray for, they are from an internal spring of grace. If there be generally an unsuitableness in our minds unto what we seem to contend for in our prayers, the gift may be in exercise, but the grace is wanting. If a man be every day on the exchange, and there talketh diligently and earnestly about merchandise and the affairs of trade, but when he comes home thinks no more of them, because indeed he hath nothing to do, no interest in them, he may be a very poor man notwithstanding his pretences. And he may be spiritually very poor, who is on occasions fervent in prayer, if when he retires unto himself, he is not careful and diligent about the matter of it.

4. When spiritual affections and due preparation of heart unto the duty do excite and animate the gift of prayer, and not the gift make impressions on the affections, then are we spiritually minded therein. Gifts are servants, not rulers, in the mind; are bestowed on us to be serviceable unto grace, not to lead, but to follow it, and to be ready with their assistance on its exercise. For the most part where they lead all, they are all alone. This is the natural order of these things. Grace habitually inclineth and disposeth the heart unto this duty. Providence and rule give the occasions for its exercise. Sense of duty calls for preparation. Grace coming into actual exercise, gifts come in with their assistance. If they lead all, all is out of order. It may be otherwise sometimes. A person indisposed and lifeless, engaging into prayer in a way of obedience, upon conviction of duty, may, in and by the gift, have his affections excited, and graces engaged unto its proper work. It may be so, I say; but let men take heed how they trust unto this order and method. For where it is so, there may be little or nothing of

the exercise of true grace in all their fervour and commotion of affections. But when the genuine actings of faith, love, holy reverence, and gracious desires, do stir up the gift unto its exercise, calling in its assistance unto the expression of themselves, then are the heart and mind in their proper order.

5. It is so when other duties of religion are equally regarded and attended unto with prayer itself. He, all whose religion lies in prayer and hearing, hath none at all. God hath an equal respect unto all other duties, and so must we have also. So is it expressed as unto the instance of alms, Acts x. 31. And James placeth all religion herein, because there is none without it, chap. i. 27. I shall not value his prayers at all, be he never so earnest and frequent in them, who gives not alms according to his ability. And this in an especial manner is required of us who are ministers; that we be not like a hand set up in cross ways, directing others which way to go, but staying behind itself.

This digression about the rise and spring of spiritual thoughts in prayer, I judged not unnecessary in such a time and season wherein we ought to be very jealous, lest gifts impose themselves in the room of grace, and be careful that they are employed only unto their proper end, which is to be serviceable unto grace in its exercise, and not otherwise.

3. There is another occasion of thoughts of spiritual things, when they do not spring from a living principle within, and so are no evidence of being spiritually minded. And this is the discourse of others. 'They that fear the Lord will be speaking one to another' of the things wherein his glory is concerned, Mal. iii. 16. To declare the righteousness, the glory of God, is the delight of his saints. Psal. cxlv. 3—8. 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty works. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and

of great mercy.' And accordingly there are some who are ready on all occasions to be speaking or making mention of things divine, spiritual, and holy, and it is to be wished that there were more of them. All the flagitious sins that the world is filled withal, are not a greater evidence of the degeneracy of the Christian religion than this is, that it is grown unusual, yea, a shame or scorn, for men to speak together of the things of God. It was not so when religion was in its primitive power and glory; nor is it so with them who really fear God, and are sensible of their duty. Some, I say, there are, who embrace all occasions of spiritual communication. Those with whom they do converse, if they are not profligate, if they have any spiritual light, cannot but so far comply with what they say, as to think of the things spoken which are spiritual. Ofttimes the track and course of men's thoughts lie so out of the way, are so contrary unto such things, that they seem strange unto them, they give them no entertainment. You do but cross their way with such discourses, whereon they stand still a little and so pass on. Even the countenances of some men will change hereon, and they betake themselves unto an unsatisfied silence, until they can divert unto other things. Some will make such replies of empty words, as shall evidence their hearts to be far enough estranged from the things proposed unto them. But with others, such occasional discourses will make such impressions on their minds as to stir up present thoughts of spiritual things. But though frequent occasions hereof may be renewed, yet will such thoughts give no evidence that any man is spiritually minded. For they are not genuine, from an internal spring of grace.

From these causes it is, that the thoughts of spiritual things are with many as guests that come into an inn, and not like children that dwell in the house. They enter occasionally, and then there is a great stir about them, to provide meet entertainment for them. Within awhile they are disposed of, and so depart unto their own occasions, being neither looked nor inquired after any more. Things of another nature are attended unto; new occasions bring in new guests for a season. Children are owned in the house, are missed if they are out of the way, and have their daily provision constantly made for them. So is it with these occa-

sional thoughts about spiritual things. By one means or other they enter into the mind, and there are entertained for a season. On a sudden they depart, and men hear of them no more. But those that are natural and genuine, arising from a living spring of grace in the heart disposing the mind unto them, are as the children of the house. They are expected in their places and at their seasons. If they are missing, they are inquired after. The heart calls itself unto an account whence it is that it hath been so long without them, and calls them over into its wonted converse with them.

CHAP. IV.

Other evidences of thoughts about spiritual things, arising from an internal principle of grace, whereby they are an evidence of our being spiritually minded. The abounding of these thoughts, how far, and wherein, such an evidence.

The second evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things do proceed from an internal fountain of sanctified light and affections, or that they are acts or fruits of our being spiritually minded, is, that they abound in us, that our minds are filled with them. We may say of them as the apostle doth of other graces; 'If these things are in you and abound, you shall not be barren.' It is well indeed, when our minds are like the land of Egypt in the years of plenty, when it brought forth by handfulls; when they flow from the well of living water in us with a full stream and current. But there is a measure of abounding, which is necessary to evidence our being spiritually minded in them.

There is a double effect ascribed here unto this frame of spirit: first life, and then peace. The nature and being of this grace depends on the former consideration of it, namely, its procedure from an internal principle of grace, the effect and consequence whereof is life. But that it is peace also, depends on this degree and measure of the actings of this part of it in our spiritual thoughts. And this we must consider.

It is the character of all men in the state of depraved nature and apostacy from God, 'that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, is only evil continually;' Gen. vi. 5. All persons in that condition are not swearers, blasphemers, drunkards, adulterers, idolaters, or the like. These are the vices of particular persons, the effects of particular constitutions and temptations. But thus it is with them, all and every one of them, all the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are evil, and that continually. Some as unto the matter of them, some as unto their end, all as unto their principle; for out of the evil treasure of the heart can proceed nothing but what is evil. That infinite multitude of open sins which is in the world, doth give a clear prospect or representation of the nature and effects of our apostacy from God. But he that can consider the numberless number of thoughts which pass through the minds of every individual person every day, all evil, and that continually, he will have a farther comprehension of it.

We can therefore have no greater evidence of a change in us from this state and condition, than a change wrought in the course of our thoughts. A relinquishment of this or that particular sin, is not an evidence of a translation from this state. For as was said, such particular sins proceed from particular lusts and temptations, and are not the immediate universal consequence of that depravation of nature which is equal in all. Such alone is the vanity and wickedness of the thoughts and imaginations of the heart. A change herein is a blessed evidence of a change of state. He who is cured of a dropsy is not immediately healthy, because he may have the prevailing seeds and matter of other diseases in him, and the next day die of a lethargy. But he who, from a state of sickness, is restored in the temperature of the mass of blood and the animal spirits, and all the principles of life and health, unto a good crisis and temperature, his state of body is changed. The cure of a particular sin may leave behind it the seeds of eternal death, which they may quickly effect. But he who hath obtained a change in this character which belongs essentially unto the state of depraved nature, is spiritually recovered. And the more the stream of our thoughts is turned, the more our

minds are filled by those of a contrary nature, the greater and more firm is our evidence of a translation out of that depraved state and condition.

There is nothing so unaccountable as the multiplicity of thoughts of the minds of men. They fall from them like the leaves of trees when they are shaken with the wind in autumn. To have all these thoughts, all the several figments of the heart, all the conceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, to be evil and that continually, what a hell of horror and confusion must it needs be? A deliverance from this loathsome hateful state is more to be valued than the whole world. Without it neither life, nor peace, nor immortality, or glory, can ever be attained.

The design of conviction is to put a stop unto these thoughts, to take off from their number, and thereby to lessen their guilt. It deserves not the name of conviction of sin, which respects only outward actions, and regards not the inward actings of the mind. And this alone will for a season make a great change in the thoughts, especially it will do so when assisted by superstition directing them unto other objects. These two in conjunction are the rise of all that devotional religion which is in the papacy. Conviction labours to put some stop and bounds unto thoughts absolutely evil and corrupt; and superstition suggests other objects for them which they readily embrace; but it is a vain attempt. The minds and hearts of men are continually minting and coining new thoughts and imaginations. The cogitative faculty is always at work. As the streams of a mighty river running into the ocean, so are the thoughts of a natural man, and through self they run into hell. It is a fond thing to set a dam before such a river, to curb its streams. For a little space there may be a stop made, but it will quickly break down all obstacles or overflow all its bounds. There is no way to divert its course but only by providing other channels for its waters, and turning them thereinto. The mighty stream of the evil thoughts of men will admit of no bounds or dams to put a stop unto them. There are but two ways of relief from them; the one respecting their moral evil, the other their natural abundance. The first by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jericho; that is, to get the heart and mind seasoned with grace; for the

tree must be made good before the fruit will be so. The other is, to turn their streams into new channels, putting new aims and ends upon them, fixing them on new objects; so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in thoughts we shall, whether we will or no.

To this purpose is the advice of the apostle, Ephes. v. 18, 19. 'And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.' When men are drunk with wine unto an excess, they make it quickly evident, what vain, foolish, ridiculous imaginations it filleth their minds withal. In opposition hereunto, the apostle adviseth believers to 'be filled with the Spirit,' to labour for such a participation of him as may fill their minds and hearts, as others fill themselves with wine. To what end, unto what purpose, should they desire such a participation of him, to be so filled with him? It is unto this end, namely, that he by his grace may fill them with holy spiritual thoughts, as on the contrary men drunk unto an excess, are filled with those that are foolish, vain, and wicked. So the words of ver. 19. do declare, for he adviseth us to express our abounding thoughts, in such duties as will give an especial vent unto them.

Wherefore, when we are spiritually minded, we shall abound in spiritual thoughts, or thoughts of spiritual things. That we have such thoughts will not sufficiently evidence that we are so, unless we abound in them. And this leads us unto the principal inquiry on this head; namely, what measure we ought to assign hereof, how we may know when we abound in spiritual thoughts, so as that they may be an evidence of our being spiritually minded.

I answer in general, among other Scriptures read over Psal. cxix. with understanding. Consider therein what David expresseth of himself, as unto his constant delight in, and continual thoughts of, the law of God, which was the only means of divine revelation at that season. Try yourselves by that pattern; examine yourselves whether you can truly speak the same words with him; at least if not in the same degree of zeal, yet with the same sincerity of grace. You will say, that was David. It is not for us, it is not our duty to be like unto him, at least not to be equal with him. But

as far as I know, we must be like him, if ever we intend to come to the place where he is. It will ruin our souls, if when we read in the Scripture, how the saints of God express their experience in faith, love, delight in God, and constant meditations on him, we grant that it was so with them, that they were good and holy men, but it is not necessary that it should be so with us. These things are not written in the Scripture to shew what they were, but what we ought to be. All things concerning them 'were written for our admonition;' 1 Cor. x. 11. And if we have not the same delight in God as they had, the same spiritual mindedness in thoughts and meditations of heavenly things, we can have no evidence that we please God as they did, or shall go to that place whither they are gone. Profession of the life of God passeth with many at a very low and easy rate. Their thoughts are for the most part vain and earthly, their communication unsavoury, and sometimes corrupt, their lives at best uneven and uncertain, as unto the rule of obedience; yet all is well, all is life and peace. The holy men of old, who obtained this testimony, that they pleased God, did not so walk before him. They meditated continually in the law; thought of God in the night seasons; spake of his ways, his works, his praise; their whole delight was in him, and in all things they followed hard after him. It is the example of David in particular that I have proposed. And it is a promise of the grace to be administered by the gospel, that he 'who is feeble shall be as David;' Zech. xii. 8. And if we are not so in his being spiritually minded, it is to be feared we are not partakers of the promise. But that we may the better judge of ourselves therein, I shall add some few rules unto this direction by example.

1. Consider what proportion your thoughts of spiritual things bears with those about other things. Our principal interest and concern, as we profess, lies in things spiritual, heavenly, and eternal. Is it not then a foolish thing to suppose that our thoughts about these things, should not hold some proportion with those about other things, nay, that they should not exceed them? No man is so vain in earthly things, as to pretend that his principal concern lieth in that whereof he thinks very seldom in comparison of other things. It is not so with men in reference unto their families, their

trades, their occasions of life. It is a truth not only consecrated by the testimony of him who is truth, but evident also in the light of reason, 'that where our treasure is there will our hearts be also.' And the affections of our hearts do act themselves by the thoughts of our minds. Wherefore, if our principal treasure be, as we profess, in things spiritual and heavenly, and woe unto us if it be not so, on them will our affections, and consequently our desires and thoughts, be principally fixed.

That we may the better examine ourselves by this rule, we must consider of what sorts men's other thoughts are; and as unto our present purpose, they may be reduced unto these heads.

1. There are such as are exercised about their callings and lawful occasions. These are numberless and endless; especially among a sort of men who rise early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness, or are particularly industrious and diligent in their ways. These thoughts men approve themselves in, and judge them their duty, as they are in their proper place and measure. But no heart can conceive the multitude of these thoughts, which partly in contrivances, partly in converse, are engaged and spent about these things. And the more men are immersed in them, the more do themselves and others esteem them diligent and praiseworthy. And there are some who have neither necessity nor occasion to be engaged much in the duties of any especial calling, who yet by their words and actions declare themselves to be confined almost in their thoughts unto themselves, their relations, their children, and their self-concerns, which though most of them are very impertinent, yet they justify themselves in them. All sorts may do well to examine what proportion their thoughts of spiritual things do bear unto those of other things. I fear with most it will be found to be very small, with many next to none at all. What evidence then can they have that they are spiritually minded, that their principal interest lies in things above? It may be it will be asked, whether it be necessary that men should think as much and as often about things spiritual and heavenly, as they do about the lawful affairs of their callings? I say, more, and more often, if we are what *we profess* ourselves to be. Generally it is the best sort of

men, as to the things of God and man, who are busied in their callings, some of one sort, some of another. But even among the best of these, many will continually spend the strength of their minds and vigour of their spirits about their affairs all the day long; and, so they can pray in the morning and evening, with some thoughts sometimes of spiritual things occasionally administered, do suppose they acquit themselves very well. As if a man should pretend that his great design is, to prepare himself for a voyage unto a far country, where is his patrimony and his inheritance; but all his thoughts and contrivances are about some few trifles, which, if indeed he intend his voyage, he must leave behind him; and of his main design he scarce thinketh at all. We all profess that we are bound for heaven, immortality, and glory: but is it any evidence we really design it, if all our thoughts are consumed about the trifles of this world, which we must leave behind us, and have only occasional thoughts of things above? I shall elsewhere shew, if God will, how men may be spiritually minded in their earthly affairs. If some relief may not be thence obtained, I cannot tell what to say or answer for them, whose thoughts of spiritual things do not hold proportion with, yea, exceed them which they lay out about their callings.

This whole rule is grounded on that of our Saviour, Matt. vi. 31—34. 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewith shall we be clothed? But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow.' When we have done all we can, when we have made the best of them we are able, all earthly things, as unto our interest in them, amount to no more but what we eat, what we drink, and wherewith we are clothed. About these things our Saviour forbids us to take any thought, not absolutely, but with a double limitation. As first, That we take no such thought about them as should carry along with it a disquietment of mind, through a distrust of the fatherly care and providence of God. This is the design of the context. Secondly, No thought that for constancy and engagement of spirit, should be like unto those which we ought to have about spiritual things. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' Let that

be the principal thing in your thoughts and consciences. We may therefore conclude, that at least they must hold an exceeding proportion with them.

Let a man industriously engaged in the way of his calling, try himself by this rule every evening. Let him consider what have been his thoughts about his earthly occasions, and what about spiritual things; and thereon ask of himself whether he be spiritually minded or no. Be not deceived; as a man thinketh, so is he. And if we account it a strange thing, that our thoughts should be more exercised about spiritual things than about the affairs of our callings, we must not think it strange if, when we come to the trial, we cannot find that we have either life or peace.

Moreover it is known, how often, when we are engaged in spiritual duties, other thoughts will interpose, and impose themselves on our minds. Those which are about men's secular concernments will do so. The world will frequently make an inroad on the ways to heaven, to disturb the passengers and wayfaring men. There is nothing more frequently complained of by such as are awake unto their duty, and sensible of their weakness. Call to mind therefore, how often on the other hand, spiritual thoughts do interpose, and as it were impose themselves on your minds, whilst you are engaged in your earthly affairs. Sometimes, no doubt, but with all that are true believers it is so. 'Or ever I was aware,' saith the spouse, 'my soul made me as the chariots of Amminadib;' Cant. vi. 12. Grace in her own soul surprised her into a ready willing frame unto spiritual communion with Christ, when she was intent on other occasions. But if these thoughts of heavenly things so arising in us, bear no proportion with the other sort, it is an evidence what frame and principle is predominant in us.

2. There are a multitude of thoughts in the minds of men, which are vain, useless, and altogether unprofitable. These ordinarily, through a dangerous mistake, are looked on as not sinful, because, as it is supposed, the matter of them is not so. And therefore, men rather shake them off for their folly than their guilt. But they arise from a corrupt fountain, and wofully pollute both the mind and conscience. Wherever there are 'vain thoughts,' there is sin; Jer. iv. 14. Such are those numberless imaginations,

whereby men fancy themselves to be what they are not, to do what they do not, to enjoy what they enjoy not, to dispose of themselves and others, at their pleasure. That our nature is liable unto such a pernicious folly, which some of tenacious fancies have turned into madness, we are beholding alone to our cursed apostacy from God, and the vanity that possessed our minds thereon. Hence the prince of Tyrus thought he was a god, and 'sat in the seat of God;' Ezek. xxviii. 2. So it hath been with others. And in those, in whom such imaginations are kept unto some better order and bounds, yet being traced unto their original, they will be found to spring some of them immediately from pride, some from sensual lusts, some from the love of the world, all from self, and the old ambition to be as God, to dispose of all things as we think meet. I know no greater misery or punishment in this world, than the debasing of our nature to such vain imaginations; and a perfect freedom from them is a part of the blessedness of heaven. It is not my present work to shew how sinful they are; let them be esteemed only fruitless, foolish, vain, and ludicrous. But let men examine themselves, what number of these vain useless thoughts night and day, do rove up and down in their minds. If now it be apprehended too severe, that men's thoughts of spiritual things should exceed them that are employed about their lawful callings, let them consider what proportion they bear unto those that are vain and useless. Do not many give more time unto them than they do unto holy meditations, without an endeavour to mortify the one, or to stir up and enliven the other? Are they not more wonted to their seasons than holy thoughts are? And shall we suppose that those with whom it is so are spiritually minded?

3. There are thoughts that are formally evil; they are so in their own nature, being corrupt contrivances to fulfil the desires of the flesh in the lusts thereof. These also will attempt the minds of believers. But they are always looked on as professed enemies to the soul, and are watched against. I shall not therefore make any comparison between them and spiritual thoughts, for they abound only in them that are carnally minded.

2. The second rule to this purpose is, that we would consider, whether thoughts of spiritual things do constantly

take possession of their proper seasons. There are some times and seasons in the course of men's lives, wherein they retire themselves unto their own thoughts. The most busied men in the world have some times of thinking unto themselves. And those who design no such thing, as being afraid of coming to be wiser and better than they are, do yet spend time therein whether they will or no. But they who are wise will be at home as much as they can, and have as many seasons for such their retirements as is possible for them to attain. If that man be foolish who busieth himself so much abroad in the concerns of others, that he hath no time to consider the state of his own house and family, much more is he so, who spendeth all his thoughts about other things, and never makes use of them in an inquiry, how it is with himself and his own soul. However, men can hardly avoid, but that they must have some seasons, partly stated, partly occasional, wherein they entertain themselves with their own thoughts. The evening and the morning, the times of waking on the bed, those of the necessary cessation of all ordinary affairs, of walking, journeying, and the like, are such seasons.

If we are spiritually minded, if thoughts of spiritual things do abound in us, they will ordinarily, and that with constancy, possess these seasons, look upon them as those which are their due, which belong unto them. For they are expressly assigned unto them in the way of rule, expressed in examples and commands. See Psal. xvi. 7, 8. xcii. 2. Deut. vi. 7. If they are usually given up unto other ends and occasions, are possessed with thoughts of another nature, it is an open evidence that spiritual thoughts have but little interest in our minds, little prevalency in the conduct of our souls. It is our duty to afford unto them stated times, taken away from other affairs that call for them. But if instead thereof we rob them of what is as it were their own, which no other things or business can lay any just claim unto, how dwelleth the love of spiritual things in us? Most professors are convinced that it is their duty to pray morning and evening, and it is to be wished that they were all found in the practice of it. But if ordinarily they judge themselves in the performance of that duty, to be discharged from any farther exercise of spiritual thoughts, applying

them unto things worldly, useless, or vain, they can make no pretence to be spiritually minded.

And it must be observed, which will be found to be true, that if the seasons which are as it were due unto such meditations be taken from them, they will be the worst employed of all the minutes of our lives. Vain and foolish thoughts, corrupt imaginations, will make a common haunt unto the minds of men in them, and habituate themselves unto an expectation of entertainment; whence they will grow importunate for admission. Hence, with many, those precious moments of time which might greatly influence their souls unto life and peace, if they were indeed spiritually minded, make the greatest provision for their trouble, sorrow, and confusion. For the vain and evil thoughts which some persons do accustom themselves unto in such seasons, are, or ought to be, a burden upon their consciences more than they can bear. That which providence tenders unto their good is turned into a snare; and God doth righteously leave them unto the fruits of their own folly, who so despise his gracious provision for their good. If we cannot afford unto God our spare time, it is evident that indeed we can afford nothing at all. Micah ii. 1. 'They devise iniquity upon their beds;' the seasons proper for holy contemplation, they make use of to fill their minds with wicked imaginations, 'and when the morning is light they practise it;' walking all day on all occasions, suitably unto their devices and imaginations of the night. Many will have cause to complain unto eternity, of those leisure times which might have been improved for their advantage unto eternal blessedness.

If we intend therefore to maintain a title unto this grace of being spiritually minded, if we would have any evidence of it in ourselves, without which we can have none of life or peace, and what we pretend thereof is but an effect of security, we must endeavour to preserve the claim and right of spiritual thoughts unto such seasons, and actually put them in possession of them.

3. Consider how we are affected with our disappointments about these seasons. Have we by negligence, by temptations; have we by occasional diversions or affairs of life, been taken off from thoughts of God, of Christ, of heavenly things, when we ought to have been engaged in them;

how are we affected with a view hereof? A carnal mind is well enough satisfied with the omission of any duty, so it have the pretence of a necessary occasion. If it hath lost a temporal advantage, through attendance unto a spiritual duty, it will deeply reflect upon itself, and it may be like the duty the worse afterward. But a gracious soul, one that is truly spiritually minded, will mourn under a review of such omissions, and by every one of them is stirred up unto more watchfulness for the future. Alas, will it say, how little have I been with Christ this day! How much time hath passed me without a thought of him! How foolish was I, to be wanting to such or such an opportunity! I am in arrears unto myself, and have no rest until I be satisfied.

I say, if indeed we are spiritually minded, we will duly and carefully call over the consideration of those times and seasons, wherein we ought to have exercised ourselves in spiritual thoughts; and if we have lost them, or any of them, mourn over our own negligence. But if we can omit and lose such seasons or opportunities from time to time, without regret or self-reflections, it is to be feared that we wax worse and worse. Way will be made hereby for farther omissions, until we grow wholly cold about them.

And indeed that woful loss of time that is found amongst many professors, is greatly to be bewailed. Some lose it on themselves, by a continual track of fruitless impertinent thoughts about their own concerns; some in vain converse with others, wherein for the most part they edify one another unto vanity. How much of this time might, nay ought to be redeemed for holy meditations? The good Lord make all professors sensible of their loss of former seasons, that they may be the more watchful for the future, in this great concernment of their souls. Little do some think what light, what assurance, what joy, what readiness for the cross, or for heaven, they might have attained, had they laid hold on all just seasons of exercising their thoughts about spiritual things which they have enjoyed, who now are at a loss in all, and surprised with every fear or difficulty that doth befall them.

This is the first thing that belongs unto our being spiritually minded; for, although it doth not absolutely or essentially consist therein, yet is it inseparable from it, and the

most undeceiving indication of it. And thus of abounding and abiding in thoughts about spiritual things, such as arise and spring naturally from a living principle, a spiritual frame and disposition of heart within.

CHAP. V.

The objects of spiritual thoughts, or what they are conversant about, evidencing them in whom they are to be spiritually minded. Rules directing unto steadiness in the contemplation of heavenly things. Motives to fix our thoughts with steadiness in them.

BEFORE I proceed unto the next general head, and which is the principal thing, the foundation of the grace and duty inquired after, some things must be spoken to render what hath been already insisted on, yet more particularly useful. And this is, to inquire what are, or what ought to be, the special objects of those thoughts, which under the qualifications laid down, are the evidences of our being spiritually minded. And it may be, we may be useful unto many herein, by helping of them to fix their minds, which are apt to rove into all uncertainty. For this is befallen us through the disorder and weakness of the faculties of our souls, that sometimes what the mind guides, leads, and directs unto, in things spiritual and heavenly, our wills and affections, through their depravation and corruption, will not comply withal, and so the good designings of the mind are lost. Sometimes what the will and affections are inclined unto and ready for, the mind, through its weakness and inconstancy, cannot lead them to the accomplishment of; so to will is present with us, but how to perform that will we know not. So many are barren in this duty, because they know not what to fix upon, nor how to exercise their thoughts when they have chosen a subject for their meditations. Hence they spend their time in fruitless desires that they could use their thoughts unto more purpose, rather than make any progress in the duty itself. They tire themselves, not because they are not willing to go, but because they cannot find their way. Wherefore, both these things shall be spoken unto; both what are the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts, and how we may

be steady in our contemplations of them. And I shall unto this purpose, first give some general rules, and then some particular instances in way of direction.

1. Observe the especial calls of providence, and apply your minds unto thoughts of the duties required in them and by them. There is a voice in all signal dispensations of providence. 'The voice of the Lord crieth unto the city, the men of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it;' Micah vi. 9. There is a call, a cry in every rod of God, in every chastising providence; and therein makes a declaration of his name, his holiness, his power, his greatness. This every wise substantial man will labour to discern, and so comply with the call. God is greatly provoked when it is otherwise. 'Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed;' Isa. xxvi. 11. If therefore we would apply ourselves unto our present duty, we are wisely to consider what is the voice of God, in his present providential dispensations in the world. Hearken not unto any who would give another interpretation of them, but that they are plain declarations of his displeasure and indignation against the sins of men. Is not his wrath in them revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men, especially such as detain the truth in unrighteousness, or false hypocritical professors of the gospel? Doth he not also signally declare the uncertainty and instability of earthly enjoyments, from life itself to a shoe-latchet? As also, how vain and foolish it is to adhere inordinately unto them? The fingers that appeared writing on the wall the doom of Belshazzar, did it in characters that none could read, and words that none could understand but Daniel. But the present call of God in these things is made plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. If the heavens gather blackness with clouds, and it thunder over us, if any that are on their journey will not believe that there is a storm coming, they must bear the severity of it.

Suppose then this to be the voice of providence, suppose there be in it these indications of the mind and will of God, what are the duties that we are called unto thereby? They may be referred unto two heads.

1. A diligent search into ourselves, and a holy watch over ourselves, with respect unto those ways and sins which

the displeasure of God is declared against. That present providences are indications of God's anger and displeasure, we take for granted. But when this is done, the most are apt to cast the causes of them on others and to excuse themselves; so long as they see others more wicked and profligate than themselves, openly guilty of such crimes, as they abhor the thoughts of, they cast all the wrath on them, and fear nothing but that they shall suffer with them. But alas! when the storm came on the ship at sea, wherein there was but one person that feared God; upon an inquiry for whose sake it came, 'the lot fell on him;' Jonah i. 7. The cause of the present storm may as well be the secret sins of professors, as the open provocations of ungodly men. God will punish severely those which he hath known; Amos iii. 2. It is therefore certainly our duty to search diligently, that nothing be found resting in us, against which God is declaring his displeasure. Take heed of negligence and security herein. When our Saviour foretold his disciples, 'that one of them should betray him,' he who alone was guilty, was the last that said, 'Master, is it I?' Let no ground of hopes you have of your spiritual condition and acceptance with God, no sense of your sincerity in any of your duties, no visible difference between you and others in the world, impose themselves on your minds to divert them from diligence in this duty; 'the voice of the Lord crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom will see his name.'

2. A diligent endeavour to live in a holy resignation of our persons, our lives, our families, all our enjoyments, unto the sovereign will and wisdom of God; so as that we may be in readiness to part with all things upon his call without repining. This also is plainly declared in the voice of present providences. God is making wings for men's riches, he is shaking their habitations, taking away the visible defences of their lives, proclaiming the instability and uncertainty of all things here below; and if we are not minded to contend with him, we have nothing left to give us rest and peace for a moment, but a holy resignation of all unto his sovereign pleasure.

Would you now know what you should fix and exercise your thoughts upon, so as that they may be evidences of your being spiritually minded? I say, be frequently con-

versant in them about these things. They lie before you, they call upon you, and will find you a just employment. Count them part of your business, allow them some part of your time, cease not until you have the testimony of your consciences, that you have in sincerity stated both these duties in your minds, which will never be done without many thoughts about them. Unless it be so with you, God will be greatly displeased at the neglect of his coming and call, now it is so plain and articulate. Fear the woful dooms recorded, Prov. i. 24—28. Isa. lvi. 12. lxvi. 4. to this purpose. And if any calamity, public or private, do overtake you under a neglect of these duties, you will be wofully surprised, and not know which way to turn for relief. This therefore is the time and season wherein you may have an especial trial and experiment whether you be spiritually minded or no. It is the wisdom of faith to excite and draw forth grace into exercise according unto present occasions. If this grace be habitually resident in you, it will put itself forth in many thoughts about these present duties.

But alas! for the most part, men are apt to walk contrary to God in these things, as the wisdom of the flesh is contrary unto him in all things. A great instance we have with respect unto these duties, especially the latter of them. For, 1. Who almost makes a diligent search into, and trial of, his heart and ways, with respect unto the procuring causes of the displeasure and judgments of God? Generally, when the tokens and evidences of them do most abound, the world is full of outrageous provoking sins. These visibly proclaim themselves to be the causes of the 'coming of the wrath of God on the children of disobedience.' Hence most men are apt to cast the whole reason of present judgments upon them, and to put it wholly from themselves. Hence commonly there is never less of self-examination, than when it is called for in a peculiar manner. But as I will not deny, but that the open daring sins of the world, are the procuring cause of the wrath of God against it in temporal judgments; so, the wisest course for us is to refer them unto the great judgment of the last day. This the apostle directs us unto, 2 Thess. i. 6—10. Our duty it is to consider on what accounts 'judgment begins at the house of God,' and to examine ourselves with respect thereunto.

2. Again, the other part of our present duty in compliance with the voice of Providence, is an humble resignation of ourselves and all our concernments unto the will of God, sitting loose in our affections from all earthly temporal enjoyments. This we neither do, nor can do, let us profess what we will, unless our thoughts are greatly exercised about the reasons of it and motives unto it. For this is the way whereby faith puts forth its efficacy unto the mortification of self and all earthly enjoyments. Wherefore without this we can make no resignation of ourselves unto the will of God. But alas! how many at present do openly walk contrary unto God herein? The ways, the countenances, the discourses, of men do give evidence hereunto. Their love unto present things, their contrivances for their increase and continuance do grow and thrive under the calls of God to the contrary. So it was of old; 'they did eat, they drank, they married, and gave in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark.' Can the generality of professors at this day give testimony unto the exercise of their thoughts upon such things as should dispose them unto this holy resignation? that they meditate on the calls of God, and thence make themselves ready to part with all at his time and pleasure? How can persons pretend to be spiritually minded, the current of whose thoughts lies in direct contrariety unto the mind of God?

Here lies the ground of their self-deceivings; they are professors of the gospel in a peculiar manner, they judge themselves believers, they hope they shall be saved, and have many evidences for it. But one negative evidence will render a hundred that are positive useless. 'All these things have I done,' saith the young man; 'yet one thing thou wantest,' saith our Saviour. And the want of that one rendered his 'all things' of no avail unto him. Many things you have done, many things you do, many grounds of hope abide with you, neither yourselves nor others do doubt of your condition. But are you spiritually minded? If this one thing be wanting, all the rest will not avail you, you have indeed neither life nor peace. And what grounds have you to judge that you are so, if the current of your thoughts lie in direct contrariety unto the present calls of God? If at such a time as this is, your love to the world be such as ever it was, and

perhaps be increased; if your desires are strong to secure the things of this life unto you and yours; if the daily contrivance of your minds be not how you may attain a constant resignation of yourselves and your all unto the will of God, which will not be done without much thoughtfulness and meditations on the reasons of it, and motives unto it, I cannot understand how you can judge yourselves to be spiritually minded.

If any therefore shall say, that they would abound more in spiritual thoughts, only they know not what to fix them upon; I propose this in the first place, as that which will lead them unto the due performance of present duties.

2. The special trials and temptations of men, call for the exercise of their thoughts in a peculiar manner with respect unto them. If a man hath a bodily disease, pain, or distemper, it will cause him to think much of it whether he will or no; at least if he be wise he will so do; nor will he always be complaining of their smart, but inquire into their causes and seek their removal. Yet are there some distempers, as lethargies, which in their own nature take away all sense and thoughts of themselves; and some are of such a slow secret progress, as hectic fevers, that they are not taken notice of. But both these are mortal. And shall men be more negligent about the spiritual distempers of their souls; so as to have multiplied temptations, the cause of all spiritual diseases, and take no thought about them? Is it not to be feared, that where it is so, they are such as either in their own nature have deprived them of spiritual sense, or by their deceitfulness are leading on insensiblty unto death eternal? Not to have our minds exercised about these things, is to be stupidly secure; Prov. xxiii. 34, 35.

There is I confess some difficulty in this matter, how to exercise our thoughts aright about our temptations. For the great way of the prevalency of temptations is by stirring up multiplied thoughts about their objects, or what they do lead unto. And this is done or occasioned several ways: 1. From the previous power of lust in the affections. This will fill the mind with thoughts. The heart will coin imaginations in compliance therewith. They are the way and means whereby lust draws away the heart *from duty* and enticeth unto sin; James i. 14. The means

at least whereby men come to have 'eyes full of adultery,' 2 Pet. ii. 14. or live in constant contemplation of the pleasures of sin. 2. They arise and are occasioned by renewed representations of the object of sin. And this is twofold: 1. That which is real, as Achan saw the wedge of gold and coveted it; Josh. vii. 21. Prov. xxiii. 31. Against this is that prayer of the psalmist, 'turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;' and the covenant of Job, chap. xxxi. 1. 2. Imaginary, when the imagination being tainted or infected by lust, continually represents the pleasure of sin and the actings of it unto the mind. Herein do men make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; Rom. xiii. 14. 3. From the suggestions of Satan, who useth all his wiles and artifices to stir up thoughts about that sin whereunto the temptation leads. And temptation seldom fails of its end, when it can stir up a multitude of unprofitable thoughts about its object. For when temptations do multiply thoughts about sin, proceeding from some or all of these causes, and the mind hath wonted itself to give them entertainment, those in whom they are do want nothing but opportunities and occasions, taking off the power of outward restraints, for the commission of actual sin. When men have so devised mischief, 'they practise it when it is in the power of their hand;' Micah ii. 1. It is no way safe to advise such persons to have many thoughts about their temptations; they will all turn to their disadvantage.

I speak unto them only, unto whom their temptations are their affliction and their burden. And such persons also must be very careful how they suffer their thoughts to be exercised about the matter of their temptation, lest it be a snare, and be too hard for them. Men may begin their thoughts of any object with abhorrency and detestation, and, if it be in case of temptation, end them in complacency and approbation. The deceitfulness of sin lays hold on something or other that lust in the mind stays upon with delectation, and so corrupts the whole frame of spirit which began the duty. There have been instances wherein persons have entered with a resolution to punish sin, and have been ensnared by the occasion unto the commission of the sin they thought to punish. Wherefore, it is seldom that

the mind of any one exercised with an actual temptation, is able safely to conflict with it, if it entertain abiding thoughts of the matter of it, or of the sin whereunto it leads. For sin hath 'mille nocendi artes,' and is able to transfuse its poison into the affections from every thing it hath once made a bait of, especially if it hath already defiled the mind with pleasing contemplations of it. Yea, oftentimes a man that hath some spiritual strength and therein engageth unto the performance of duties, if in the midst of them the matter of his temptation is so presented unto him, as to take hold of his thoughts in a moment, as if he had seen (as they say) Medusa's head, he is turned into a stone; his spirits are all frozen, his strength is gone, all actings of grace do cease, his armour falls from him, and he gives up himself a prey to his temptation. It must be a new supply of grace that can give him any deliverance. Wherefore, whilst persons are exercised with any temptation, I do not advise them to be conversant in their thoughts about the matter of it. For sometimes remembrances of former satisfaction of their lusts, sometimes present surprisals, with the suitableness of it unto corruption not yet mortified, sometimes the craft of Satan fixing their imagination on it, will be too hard for them, and carry them unto a fresh compliance with that sin, which they would be delivered from.

But this season calls in an especial manner for the exercise of the thoughts of men, about the ways and means of deliverance from the snare wherein they are taken, or the danger they find themselves exposed unto. Think of the guilt of sin, that you may be humbled. Think of the power of sin, that you may seek strength against it. Think not of the matter of sin, the things that are in the world suited unto the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, lest you be more and more entangled. But the present direction is, think much of the ways of relief from the power of your own temptation leading unto sin. But this men, unless they are spiritually minded, are very loath to come unto. I speak not of them that love their shackles, that glory in their yoke, that like their temptations well enough, as those which give the most satisfactory entertainment unto their minds. Such men

know not well what to do unless they may in their minds converse with the objects of their lusts, and do multiply thoughts about them continually. The apostle calls it 'making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Their principal trouble is, that they cannot comply with them to the utmost by reason of some outward restraints. These dwell near unto those fools who make a mock of sin, and will ere long take up their habitation among them.

But I speak, as I said before, of them only whose temptations are their afflictions, and who groan for deliverance from them. Acquaint such persons with the great, indeed only, way of relief in this distress, as it is expressed, Heb. ii. 17, 18. 'He is a merciful and faithful high priest in things appertaining unto God. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;' and chap. iv. 15, 16. 'For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need:' let them know that their only way for their deliverance is by acting faith in thoughts on Christ, his power to succour them that are tempted, with the ways whereby he administereth a sufficiency of grace unto that end; retreating for relief unto him on the urgency of temptations, they can hardly be brought unto a compliance therewithal. They are ready to say, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel?' Is it not better to betake ourselves and to trust unto our own promises, resolutions, and endeavours, with such other ways of escape as are in our own power? I shall speak nothing against any of them in their proper place, so far as they are warranted by Scripture rule. But this I say, none shall ever be delivered from perplexing temptations unto the glory of God and their own spiritual advantage, but by the acting and exercising of faith on Christ Jesus, and the sufficiency of his grace for our deliverance. But when men are not spiritually minded, they cannot fix their thoughts on spiritual things. Therefore do men daily pine away under their temptations, they get

ground upon them, until their breach grow great like the sea, and there be no healing of it.

I mention this only to shew the weight and necessity of the duty proposed. For when men under the power of conviction are pressed with temptation, they will do any thing rather than betake themselves unto the only efficacious relief. Some will groan and cry out under their vexation from the torture they are put unto in the conflict between their temptations and convictions. Some will betake themselves unto the pretended relief that any false religion tenders unto them: But to apply themselves in thoughts of faith unto Jesus Christ, whose grace alone is sufficient for all, that they will not be persuaded unto.

We are all of us liable unto temptations. Those who are not sensible of it, are under the power of what the temptation leads unto. And they are of two sorts; first, such as are extraordinary, when the hand of God is in them in a peculiar manner for our rebuke. It is true, God tempts none, as temptation formally leads unto sin. But he orders temptations so far forth as they are afflictive and chastisements. Thus it is when he suffers an especial corruption within to fall in conjunction with an especial temptation without, and to obtain a prevalency thereby. Of these there is no doubt, but any man not judicially hardened, may know both his disease and the remedy. But that ordinary course of temptations which we are exercised withal, needs a diligent attendance for their discovery as well as for our deliverance from them. And it is to be feared, that many are kept in spiritual weakness, useless, and in darkness, all their days, through the power of their temptations, yet never know what they are, or wherein they consist. These gray hairs are sprinkled on them, yet they know it not; some approve themselves in those very things and ways which are their temptations. Yet in the exercise of due watchfulness, diligence, and prudence, men may know both the plague of their own hearts in their prevailing corruptions, and the ways whereby it is excited through temptation, with the occasions it makes use of, and the advantages it takes. For instance; one may have an eminency in gifts, and usefulness or success in his labours, which gives him great acceptance with others. Such a one shall hardly avoid a double temptation. First, of spi

ritual pride and self-exaltation. Hence the apostle will not admit a novice, one unexperienced in the ways of grace and deceits of sin, into the office of the ministry, lest he should be lifted up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil; 1 Tim. iii. 6. He himself was not without danger hereof; 2 Cor. xii. 17. The best of men can hardly fortify their minds against the secret workings of pride upon successes and applause, unless they keep themselves constantly balanced with thoughts of their own vileness in the sight of God. And, secondly, remissness unto exact universal mortification, which they countenance themselves against, by their acceptance and success above others in the ministry. It were much to be desired that all who are ministers, would be careful in these things; for although some of us may not much please others, yet we may so far please ourselves, as to expose our souls unto these snares. And the effects of negligence herein do openly appear unto the disadvantage of the gospel. Others are much conversant in the world and the affairs of it. Negligence as unto a spiritual watch, vanity in converse, love of earthly things, with conformity unto the world, will on all occasions impose themselves upon them. If they understand not their temptations herein, spiritual mindedness will be impaired in them continually. Those that are rich have their especial temptations, which for the most part are many, plausible, and effectual; and those that are poor have theirs also. The snares of some lie in their constitutions, of others in their society, of most in the various circumstances of life. Those who are upon their watch in any due measure, who exercise any wisdom or observation concerning themselves, may know wherein their temptations do lie, what are the advantages whereby they perplex their minds and endanger their souls.

In these cases, generally, men are taught what are the ways and means of their deliverance and preservation. Wherefore there are three things required unto this duty, and spiritual wisdom unto them all: 1. To know what are the especial temptations from whence you suffer, and whereby the life of God is obstructed in you. If this be neglected, if it be disregarded, no man can maintain either life or peace, or is spiritually minded. 2. Know your remedy, your relief, wherein alone it doth consist. Many duties are required of

us unto this end, and are useful thereunto. But know assuredly, that no one of them, not all of them in conjunction, will bring in relief unto the glory of God and your own peace, without application by faith unto him who 'is able to succour them that are tempted.' Wherefore, 3. Herein lies your great duty with respect unto your temptations, namely, in a constant exercise of yourthoughts on the love, care, compassion, and tenderness of Christ, with his ability to help, succour, and save them that do believe, so to strengthen your faith and trust in him, which will prove assuredly successful and victorious.

The same duty is incumbent on us with respect unto any urgent prevalent general temptation. There are seasons wherein an hour of temptation comes on the earth to try them that dwell therein. What if a man should judge that now it is such an hour, and that the power of darkness is put forth therein? What if he should be persuaded that a general security, coldness, deadness, and decay in grace, especially as to the vigorous actings of zeal, love, and delight in God, with an indifferency unto holy duties, are the effects of this hour of temptation? I do not say determinately that so it is, let others judge as they see cause. But if any one do so judge, undoubtedly it is his duty to be exercised in his thoughts, how he may escape in this day of trial, and be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. He will find it his concernment to be conversant in his mind with the reasons and motives unto watchfulness, and how he may obtain such supplies of grace as may effectually preserve him from such decays.

3. All things in religion, both in faith and practice, are to be the objects of such thoughts. As they are proposed or occur in our minds in great variety on all sorts of occasions, so we ought to give them entertainment in our meditations. To hear things, to have them proposed unto us, it may be, in the way of a divine ordinance, and to let them slip out or flow from us, as water that is poured into a leaking vessel, is the ruin of many souls. I shall therefore choose out some instances, as was before proposed, of those things which I judge that they who would be spiritually minded, ought to abide and abound in thoughts concerning them.

1. It is our duty greatly to mind the things that are above,

eternal things, both as unto their reality, their present state, and our future enjoyment of them. Herein consists the life of this grace and duty. To be heavenly minded, that is, to mind the things of heaven, and to be spiritually minded is all one; or it is the effect of being spiritually minded, as unto its original and essence; or the first proper actings of it. It is the cause of it, as unto its growth and degrees; and it is the evidence of it in experience. Nor do I understand how it is possible for a man to place his chief interest in things above, and not have many thoughts of them. It is the great advice of the apostle, on a supposition of our interest in Christ and conformity unto him, Col. iii. 1, 2. 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on' (or your thoughts), mind much, 'the things that are above.' It becomes those who through the virtue of the resurrection of Christ are raised unto newness of life, to have their thoughts exercised on the state of things above, with respect unto the presence of Christ among them. And the singular use of our prospect into these things, or our meditations on them, he instructs us in, 2 Cor. iv. 16—18. 'For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' Not to faint under the daily decays of our outward man, and the approaches of death thereby, to bear afflictions as things light and momentary, to thrive under all in the inward man, are unspeakable mercies and privileges. Can you attain a better frame? Is there any thing that you would more desire, if you are believers? Is it not better to have such a mind in us, than to enjoy all the peace and security that the world can afford? One principal means whereby we are made partakers of these things, is a due meditation on things unseen and eternal. These are the things that are within the vail, whereon we ought to cast the anchor of our hope in all the storms we meet withal, Heb. vi. 19, 20. whereof we shall speak more afterward.

Without doubt the generality of Christians are greatly

defective in this duty, partly for want of light into them, partly for want of delight in them; they think little of an eternal country. Wherever men are, they do not use to neglect thoughts of that country wherein their inheritance lies. If they are absent from it for a season, yet will they labour to acquaint themselves with the principal concernments of it. But this heavenly country, wherein lies our eternal inheritance, is not regarded. Men do not as they ought exercise themselves unto thoughts of things eternal and invisible. It were impossible if they did so, that their minds should be so earthly, and their affections cleave so as they do unto present things. He that looks steadily on the sun, although he cannot bear the lustre of its beams fully, yet his sight is so affected with it, that when he calls off his eyes from it, he can see nothing as it were of the things about him, they are all dark unto him. And he who looks steadily in his contemplations on things above, eternal things, though he cannot comprehend their glory, yet a veil will be cast by it on all the desirable beauties of earthly things, and take off his affections from them.

Men live and act under the power of a conviction, that there is a state of immortality and glory to come. With a persuasion hereof they much relieve themselves in their sorrows, sufferings, and temptations. Yet with many it is only a reserve when they can be here no more; but as unto daily contemplation of the nature and causes of it, or as unto any entrance into it by faith and hope, the most are strangers thereunto. If we are spiritually minded, nothing will be more natural unto us, than to have many thoughts of eternal things, as those wherein all our own principal concerns do lie, as well as those which are excellent and glorious in themselves. The direction thereon is, that we would make heavenly things, the things of the future state of blessedness and glory, a principal object of our thoughts; that we would think much about them, that we would meditate much upon them. Many are discouraged herein, by their ignorance and darkness, by their want of due conceptions and steady apprehensions of invisible things. Hence one of these two things do befall them, when they would meditate on things above. 1. The glory of them, the glory of God in them, being essentially infinite and incomprehensible,

doth immediately overwhelm them, and, as it were in a moment, put them unto an utter loss, that they cannot frame one thought in their minds about them. Or, 2. They want skill and ability to conceive aright of invisible things, and to dispose of them in such order in their minds, as that they may sedately exercise their thoughts about them. Both these shall be afterward spoken unto. At present I shall only say, that,

Whosoever shall sincerely engage in this duty according unto what he hath, and shall abide constant therein, he will make such a refreshing progress in his apprehension of heavenly things, as he will be greatly satisfied withal. We are kept in darkness, ignorance, and unsteadiness of meditations about them, not from the nature of the things themselves, but from our own sloth, negligence, and readiness to be turned aside by apprehensions of difficulties, of the lion in the way. Wherefore, I shall consider two things: 1. What are the principal motives unto this duty of fixing our thoughts on the things that are above, and the advantages which we receive thereby. 2. Give some directions how and on what in particular we may exercise our thoughts on those things above.

1. Faith will be increased and strengthened by it. Invisible things are the proper objects of faith. It is the evidence of things not seen;' Heb. xi. 1. Wherefore in our thoughts of them, faith is in its proper exercise, which is the principal means of its growth and increase. And hereon two things will ensue.

1. The soul will come unto a more satisfactory abiding sense of the reality of them. Things of imagination which maintain a value of themselves by darkness, will not bear a diligent search into them. They lose of their reputation on every serious inquiry. If rational men would but give themselves the liberty of free indagation by their own thoughts, it would quickly cashier the fool's paradise of Mahomet, the purgatory of the Papists, and all such creatures of imagination and superstition. But where things are real and substantial, the more they are inquired into, the more they evidence their being and subsistence. It is not therefore every profession of a faith of a future state of blessedness, that will realize it in our minds. And therefore, for the most

part, it is rather a notion that men have of heavenly things which they do not contradict, than any solid satisfaction in, or spiritual sense of, their reality. For these are things that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor will enter into the heart of man to conceive;' whose existence, nature, and real state are not easily comprehended. But through the continual exercise of holy thoughts about them, the soul obtains an entrance into the midst of them, finding in them both durable substance and riches. There is no way therefore to strengthen faith unto any degree, but by a daily contemplation on the things themselves. They who do not think of them frequently shall never believe them sincerely. They admit not of any collateral evidence, where they do not evidence themselves unto our souls. Faith, as we said, thus exercised, will give them a subsistence, not in themselves, which they have antecedent thereunto; but in us, in our hearts, in the minds of them that do believe. Imagination creates its own object; faith finds it prepared beforehand. It will not leave a bare notion of them in the understanding, but give them a spiritual subsistence in the heart; as Christ himself dwells in our hearts by faith. And there are two things that will discover this subsistence of them in us: 1. When we find them in a continual readiness to rise up in our minds, on all occasions wherein the thoughts and remembrance of them are needful and useful unto us. There are many seasons, some whereof shall be immediately spoken unto, and many duties wherein and whereunto the faith and thoughts of things invisible and eternal are needful unto us, so as that we cannot fill up those seasons, nor perform those duties in a due manner without them. If on all such occasions they do from the inward frame of our minds present themselves unto us, or through our acquaintance and familiarity with them, we recur in our thoughts unto them, they seem to have a real subsistence given unto them in our souls. But if on such occasions wherein alone they will yield us help and relief, we accustom ourselves to other thoughts, if those concerning them are as it were out of the way, and arise not in our minds of their own accord, we are yet strangers unto this effect of faith. 2. They are realized unto us, they have a subsistence in us, when the soul continually longeth to be in them. When they have given such a relish unto our

hearts, as the first fruits of glory, that we cannot but desire on all opportune considerations, to be in the full enjoyment of them, faith seems to have had its effectual work herein upon us. For want of these things do many among us walk in disconsolation all their days.

2. It will gradually give the heart an acquaintance with the especial nature and use of these things. General thoughts and notions of heaven and glory do but fluctuate up and down in the mind, and very little influence it unto other duties. But assiduous contemplation will give the mind such distinct apprehensions of heavenly things as shall duly affect it with the glory of them.

1. The more we discern of the glory and excellency of them in their own nature, of their suitableness unto ours, as our only proper rest and blessedness, as the perfection and complement of what is already begun in us by grace, of the restless tendency of all gracious dispositions and inclinations of our hearts towards their enjoyment, the more will faith be established in its cleaving unto them; so in the contemplation of these things consists the principal food of faith, whereby it is nourished and strengthened. And we are not to expect much work, where there is not provision of proper food for them that labour. No wonder if we find faith faint and weak in the work it hath to do, which ofttimes is great and weighty, if we neglect to guide it daily unto that which should administer strength unto it.

2. It will give life and exercise unto the grace of hope. Hope is a glorious grace, whereunto blessed effects are ascribed in the Scripture, and an effectual operation unto the supportment and consolation of believers. By it are we purified, sanctified, saved. And to sum up the whole of its excellency and efficacy, it is a principal way of the working of Christ as inhabiting in us; Col. i. 27. 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' Where Christ evidenceth his presence with us, he gives us an infallible hope of glory; he gives us an assured pledge of it, and worketh our souls into an expectation of it. Hope in general is but an uncertain expectation of a future good which we desire. But as it is a gospel grace, all uncertainty is removed from it, which would hinder us of the advantage intended in it. It is an earnest expectation proceeding from faith, trust, and confidence,

accompanied with longing desires of enjoyment. From a mistake of its nature it is, that few Christians labour after it, exercise themselves unto it, or have the benefit of it. For to live by hope, they suppose infers a state not only beneath the life of faith and all assurance in believing, but also exclusive of them. They think to hope to be saved is a condition of men who have no grounds of faith or assurance. But this is to turn a blessed fruit of the Spirit into a common affection of nature. Gospel hope is a fruit of faith, trust, and confidence. Yea, the height of the actings of all grace issues in a well-grounded hope, nor can it rise any higher. Rom. v. 2—5.

Now the reason why men have no more use of, no more benefit by, this excellent grace, is because they do not abide in thoughts and contemplation of the things hoped for. The especial object of hope is eternal glory; Col. i. 27. Rom. v. 2. The peculiar use of it is, to support, comfort, and refresh the soul in all trials, under all weariness and despondencies, with a firm expectation of a speedy entrance into that glory, with an earnest desire after it. Wherefore, unless we acquaint ourselves by continual meditation with the reality and nature of this glory, it is impossible it should be the object of a vigorous active hope, such as whereby the apostle says, 'we are saved.' Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things, nor that valuation of them, nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of gracious hope about them.

Suppose sundry persons engaged in a voyage unto a most remote country, wherein all of them have an apprehension that there is a place of rest, and an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension they all put themselves upon their voyage, to possess what is so prepared. Howbeit some of them have only a general notion of these things, they know nothing distinctly concerning them, and are so busied about other affairs that they have no leisure to inquire into them, or do suppose that they cannot come unto any satisfactory knowledge of them in particular, and so are content to go on with general hopes and expectations. Others there are who by all possible means acquaint themselves particularly with the nature of the climate whither they are going, with the excellency of the inheritance and provision that is

made for them. Their voyage proves long and wearisome, their difficulties many and their dangers great, and they have nothing to relieve and encourage themselves but the hope and expectation of the country whither they are going. Those of the first sort will be very apt to despond and faint; their general hopes will not be able to relieve them. But those who have a distinct notion and apprehension of the state of things whither they are going, and of their incomparable excellency, have always in a readiness wherewith to cheer their minds and support themselves.

In that journey or pilgrimage wherein we are engaged towards a heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of dangers, difficulties, and perils. It is not a general notion of blessedness that will excite and work in us a spiritual refreshing hope. But when we think and meditate on future glory as we ought, that grace which is neglected for the most part as unto its benefit, and dead as unto its exercise, will of all others be most vigorous and active, putting itself forth on all occasions. This therefore is an inestimable benefit of the duty exhorted unto, and which they find the advantage of, who are really spiritually minded.

3. This alone will make us ready for the cross, for all sorts of sufferings that we may be exposed unto.

There is nothing more necessary unto believers at this season, than to have their minds furnished with provision of such things as may prepare them for the cross and sufferings. Various intimations of the mind of God, circumstances of providence, the present state of things in the world, with the instant peril of the latter days, do all call them hereunto. If it be otherwise with them, they will at one time or other be wofully surprised, and think strange of their trials, as if some strange thing did befall them. Nothing is more useful unto this end, than constant thoughts and contemplations of eternal things and future glory. From thence alone can the soul have in a readiness, what to lay in the balance against all sorts of sufferings. When a storm begins to arise at sea, the mariners bestir themselves in the management of the tackling of the ship, and other applications of their art for their safety. But if the storm increase and come to extremity, they are forced to forego all other means and betake themselves unto a sheet-anchor, to hold their

ship steady against its violence. So when a storm of persecution and troubles begins to arise, men have various ways and considerations for their relief. But if it once comes to extremity, if sword, nakedness, famine, and death are inevitably coming upon them, they have nothing to betake themselves unto that will yield them solid relief, but the consideration and faith of things invisible and eternal.

So the apostle declares this state of things, 2 Cor. iv. 16—18. the words before insisted on. 'For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' He lays all sorts of afflictions in one scale, and on the consideration of them, declares them to be light and but for a moment. Then he lays glory in the other scale, and finds it to be ponderous, weighty, and eternal; 'an exceeding weight of glory.' In the one is sorrow for a little while, in the other eternal joy. In the one pain for a few moments, in the other everlasting rest; in the one is the loss of some few temporary things, in the other the full fruition of God in Christ, who is all in all.

Hence the same apostle casts up the account of these things, and gives us his judgment concerning them, Rom. viii. 18. 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;' there is no comparison between them, as if one had as much evil and misery in them as the other hath of good and blessedness; as though his state was any way to be complained of, who must undergo the one whilst he hath an interest in the other; or as though to escape the one he hazard the enjoyment of the other.

It is inseparable from our nature to have a fear of, and aversation from, great distressing sufferings, that are above the power of nature to bear. Even our Lord Jesus himself, having taken on him all the sinless properties of our nature, had a fear and aversation, though holy and gracious with respect unto his own. Those who through a stout-heartedness do contemn them before their approach, boasting in

themselves of their abilities to undergo them, censuring such as will not unadvisedly engage in them, are such as seldom glorify God when they are really to conflict with them. Peter alone trusted unto himself that he would not forsake his master, and seemed to take the warning ill that they should all do so; and he alone denied him. All church stories are filled with instances of such as having borne themselves high before the approach of trials, have shamefully miscarried when their trials have come. Wherefore, it is moreover allowed unto us, to use all lawful means for the avoiding of them. Both rules and examples of the Scripture give sufficient warranty for it. But there are times and seasons wherein, without any tergiversation, they are to be undergone unto the glory of God, and in the discharge of our duty, confessing Christ before men, as we would be owned by him before his Father in heaven. All things do now call us to prepare for such a season, to be martyrs in resolution, though we should never really lose our lives by violence. Nothing will give us this preparation, but to have our minds exercised in the contemplation of heavenly things, of things that are invisible and eternal. He who is thus spiritually minded, who hath his thoughts and affections set on things above, will have always in a readiness what to oppose unto any circumstance of his sufferings.

Those views which such a one hath had by faith of the uncreated glories above, of the things in heavenly places where Christ sits at the right hand of God, of the glory within the veil, whereby they have been realized and made present unto his soul, will now visit him every moment, abide with him continually, and put forth their efficacy unto his supportment and refreshment. Alas! what will become of many of us, who are grovelling continually on the earth, whose bellies cleave unto the dust, who are strangers unto the thoughts of heavenly things, when distressing troubles shall befall us? Why shall we think that refreshing thoughts of things above will then visit our souls, when we resisted their admittance in days of peace? Do you come to me in your distress, saith Jephtha, when in the time of your peace you drove me from you? When we would thus think of heavenly things to our refreshment, we shall hardly get them to make an abode with us. I know God can come in by the

mighty power of his Spirit and grace, to support and comfort the souls of them who are called and even surprised into the greatest of sufferings. Yet do I know also, that it is our duty not to tempt him in the neglect of the ways and means which he hath appointed for the communication of his grace unto us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, as 'the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame;' Heb. xii. 2. His mediatory glory in the salvation of the church was the matter of the joy set before him. This he took the view and prospect of in all his sufferings, unto his refreshment and supportment. And his example, as 'the author and finisher of our faith,' is more efficaciously instructive than any other rule or precept. Eternal glory is set before us also; it is the design of God's wisdom and grace, that by the contemplation of it we should relieve ourselves in all our sufferings, yea, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. How many of those blessed souls, now in the enjoyment of God and glory, who passed through fiery trials and great tribulations, were enabled to sing and rejoice in the flames by a prepossession of this glory in their minds through believing? yea, some of them have been so filled with them, as to take off all sense of pain under the most exquisite tortures. When Stephen was to be stoned, to encourage him in his sufferings, and comfort him in it, the 'heavens were opened, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God.' Who can conceive what contempt of all the rage and madness of the Jews, what a neglect of all the pains of death, this view raised his holy soul unto? To obtain therefore such views frequently by faith, as they do who are truly spiritually minded, is the most effectual way to encourage us unto all our sufferings. The apostle gives us the force of this encouragement in a comparison with earthly things, 1 Cor. ix. 25. 'Every man who striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things; now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.' If men, when a corruptible crown of vain honour and applause is proposed unto them, will do and endure all that is needful for the attainment of it, and relieve themselves in their hardships with thoughts and imaginations of attaining it, grounded on uncertain hopes; shall not we who have a

crown immortal and invisible proposed unto us, and that with the highest assurance of the enjoyment of it, cheerfully undergo, endure, and suffer, what we are to go through in the way unto it?

4. This is the most effectual means to wean the heart and affections from things here below; to keep the mind unto an undervaluation, yea, a contempt of them as occasion shall require. For there is a season wherein there is such a contempt required in us of all relations and enjoyments, as our Saviour calleth, the hating of them; that is, not absolutely, but comparatively, in comparison of him and the gospel, with the duties which belong unto our profession; Luke xiv. 26. 'If any man come to me, and hate not father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Some I fear, if they did but consider it, would be apt to say, 'This is a hard saying, who can bear it?' and others cry out with the disciples in another case, 'Lord, who then can be saved?' But it is the word whereby we must be judged, nor can we be the disciples of Christ on any other terms. But here in an especial manner lies the wound and weakness of faith and profession in these our days. 'The bellies of men cleave unto the dust,' or their affections unto earthly things.

I speak not of those who by rapine, deceit, and oppression, strive to enrich themselves; nor of those who design nothing more than the attainment of greatness and promotions in the world, though not by ways of open wickedness; least of all of them who make religion, and perhaps their ministry therein, a means for the attaining secular ends and preferments. No wise man can suppose such persons, any of them, to be spiritually minded, and it is most easy to disprove all their pretences. But I intend only those at present, whose ways and means of obtaining riches, are lawful, honest, and unblamable; who use them with some moderation, and do profess that their portion lies in better things; so as it is hard to fasten a conviction on them in matter of their conversation. Whatever may seem to reflect upon them, they esteem it to be that whose omission would make them foolish in their affairs, or negligent in their duty. But even among these also, there is ofttimes that inordinate love unto present things, that esteem and valuation of them,

that concernment in them, as are not consistent with their being spiritually minded. With some their relations, with some their enjoyments, with most both in conjunction, are an idol which they set up in their hearts, and secretly bow down unto. About these are their hopes and fears exercised, on them is their love, in them is their delight. They are wholly taken up with their own concerns, count all lost that is not spent on them, and all time mispent that is not engaged about them. Yet the things which they do, they judge to be good in themselves, their hearts do not condemn them as to the matter of them. The valuation they have of their relations and enjoyments they suppose to be lawful, within the bounds which they have assigned unto it. Their care about them is in their own minds but their duty. It is no easy matter, it requires much spiritual wisdom, to fix right boundaries unto our affections and their actings about earthly things. But let men plead and pretend what they please, I shall offer one rule in this case which will not fail. And this is, that when men are so confident in the good state and measure of their affections and their actings towards earthly things, as that they will oppose their engagements into them, unto known duties of religion, piety, and charity, they are gone into a sinful excess. Is there a state of the poor that requires their liberality and bounty? you must excuse them, they have families to provide for; when what is expected from them signifies nothing at all, as unto a due provision for their families, nor is what would lessen their inheritances or portions one penny in the issue. Are they called to an attendance on seasons of religious duties? they are so full of business, that it is impossible for them to have leisure for any such occasions; so by all ways declaring that they are under the power of a prevalent predominant affection unto earthly things. This fills all places with lifeless, sapless, useless professors, who approve themselves in their condition, whilst it is visibly unspiritual and withering.

The heart will have something whereon in a way of preeminence, it will fix itself and its affections. This in all its perpetual motions it seeks for rest and satisfaction in; and every man hath an edge, the edge of his affections is set one way or other, though it be more keen in some than others.

And whereas all sorts of things, that the heart can fix upon or turn the edge of its affections unto, are distributed by the apostle into 'things above' and 'things beneath,' things heavenly and things earthly, if we have not such a view and prospect of heavenly things as to cause our hearts to cleave unto them and delight in them, let us pretend what we will, it is impossible but that we shall be under the power of a predominant affection unto the things of this world.

Herein lies the great danger of multitudes at this present season. For let men profess what they will under the power of this frame, their eternal state is in hazard every moment. And persons are engaged in it in great variety of degrees. And we may cast them under two heads.

1. Some do not at all understand that things are amiss with them, or that they are much to be blamed. They plead, as was before observed, that they are all lawful things which their hearts do cleave unto, and which it is their duty to take care of and regard. May they not delight in their own relations, especially at such a time when others break and cancel all duties and bonds of relation in the service of and provision they make for their lusts? May they not be careful in good and honest ways of diligence about the things of the world, when the most either lavish their time away in the pursuit of bestial lusts, or heap them up by deceit and oppression? May they not contrive for the promotion of their children in the world, to add the other hundred or thousand pounds unto their advancement, that they may be in as good condition as others, seeing he is worse than an infidel who provides not for his own family? By such reasonings and secret thoughts do many justify themselves in their earthly mindedness. And so fixed they are in the approbation of themselves, that if you urge them to their duty, you shall loose their acquaintance, if they do not become your enemies for telling them the truth. Yea, they will avoid one duty that lieth not against their earthly interest, because it leads unto another. They will not engage in religious assemblies. Or be constant unto their duty in them, for fear duties of charity should be required of them or expected from them: on what grounds such persons can satisfy themselves that they are spiritually minded, I know not. I shall leave only one rule with persons that are thus minded.

Where our love unto the world, hath prevailed by its reasonings, pleas, and pretences, to take away our fear and jealousy over our own hearts, lest we should inordinately love it, there it is assuredly predominant in us.

2. Others are sensible of the evil of their hearts, at least are jealous and afraid lest it should be found that their hearts do cleave inordinately unto these things. Hence they endeavour to contend against this evil, sometimes by forcing themselves unto such acts of piety or charity as are contrary unto that frame, and sometimes by labouring a change of the frame itself: especially they will do so when God is pleased to awaken them by trials and afflictions, such as write vanity and emptiness on all earthly enjoyments. But for the most part they strive not lawfully, and so obtain not what they seem to aim at.

This disease with many is mortal; and will not be thoroughly cured in any but by the due exercise of this part of spiritual mindedness. There are other duties required also unto the same end, namely, of the mortification of our desires and affections unto earthly things, whereof I have treated elsewhere. But without this, or a fixed contemplation on the desirableness, beauty, and glory of heavenly things, it will not be attained. Farther to evince the truth hereof, we may observe these two things: 1. If by any means a man do seem to have taken off his heart from the love of present things, and be not at the same time taken up with the love of things that are heavenly, his seeming mortification is of no advantage unto him. So persons frequently through discontent, disappointments, or dissatisfaction with relations, or mere natural weariness, have left the world, the affairs and cares of it, as unto their wonted conversations in it, and have betaken themselves to monasteries, convents, or other retirements suiting their principles, without any advantage to their souls. 2. God is no such severe lord and master as to require us to take off our affections from, and mortify them unto, those things which the law of our nature makes dear unto us, as wives, children, houses, lands and possessions, and not propose unto us somewhat that is incomparably more excellent to fix them upon. So he invites the elect of the Gentiles unto Christ; Psal. xlv. 10. 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;

forget also thine own people and thy father's house;' that is, come into the faith of Abraham, who forsook his country and his father's house, to follow God whithersoever he pleased. But he proposeth this for their encouragement, ver. 11. 'So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.' The love of the great King is an abundant satisfactory recompense for parting with all things in this world. So when Abraham's servant was sent to take Rebekah for a wife unto Isaac, he required that she should immediately leave father and mother, brothers, and all enjoyments, and go along with him; but withal, that she might know herself to be no loser thereby, he not only assured her of the greatness of his master, but also at present he gave her jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; Gen. xxiv. 53. And when our Saviour requires that we should part with all for his sake and the gospel, he promiseth a hundred-fold in lieu of them, even in this life; namely, in an interest in things spiritual and heavenly. Wherefore, without an assiduous meditation on heavenly things, as a better, more noble, and suitable object for our affections to be fixed on, we can never be freed in a due manner from an inordinate love of the things here below.

It is sad to see some professors who will keep up spiritual duties in churches and in their families, who will speak and discourse of spiritual things, and keep themselves from the open excesses of the world; yet when they come to be tried by such duties as intrench on their love and adherence unto earthly things, quickly manifest how remote they are from being spiritually minded in a due manner. Were they to be tried, as our Saviour tried the young man who made such a profession of his conscientious and religious conversation; 'Go sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and follow me;' something might be pleaded in excuse for their tergiversation. But alas! they will decline their duty when they are not touched unto the hundreth part of their enjoyments.

I bless God, I speak not thus of many of my own knowledge; and may say with the apostle unto the most unto whom I usually speak in this manner, 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak;' Heb. vi. 9. Yea, the same testimony may be given of many in this city, which the same

apostle gives unto the churches of Macedonia; 2 Cor. viii. 1—3. 'Understand the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves.' There hath been nothing done amongst us, that may or can be boasted of, yet considering all circumstances, it may be there have not been more instances of true evangelical charity in any age or place for these many years. For them who have been but useful and helpful herein, the Lord remember them for good, and spare them according to the multitude of his mercies. It is true, they have not, many of them, founded colleges, built hospitals, or raised works of state and magnificence. For very many of them are such, as whose deep poverty comparatively hath abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The backs and bellies of multitudes of poor and needy servants of Christ have been warmed and refreshed by them, blessing God for them. 'Thanks be to God,' saith the apostle in this case, 'for his unspeakable gift;' 2 Cor. ix. 15. Blessed be God, who hath not left the gospel without this glory, nor the profession of it without this evidence of its power and efficacy. Yea, God hath exalted the glory of persecutions and afflictions. For many, since they have lost much of their enjoyments by them, and have all endangered continually, have abounded in duties of charity beyond what they did in the days of their fulness and prosperity. So 'out of the eater there hath come forth meat.' And if the world did but know what fruits in a way of charity and bounty, unto the praise of God and glory of the gospel, have been occasioned by their making many poor, it would abate of their satisfaction in their successes.

But with many it is not so. Their minds are so full of earthly things, they do so cleave unto them in their affections, that no sense of duty, no example of others, no concernment of the glory of God or the gospel can make any impressions on them. If there be yet in them so much life and light of grace, as to design a deliverance from this woful condition, the means insisted on must be made use of.

Especially this advice is needful unto those who are rich, who have large possessions, or abound in the goods of this

world. The poor, the afflicted, the sorrowful are prompted from their outward circumstances, as well as excited by inward grace, frequently to remember and to think of the things above, wherein lies their only reserve and relief against the trouble and urgency of their present condition. But the enjoyment of these things in abundance, is accompanied with a two-fold evil, lying directly contrary unto this duty.

1. A desire of increase and adding thereunto. Earthly enjoyments enlarge men's earthly desires; and the love of them grows with their income. A moderate stock of waters, sufficient for our use, may be kept within ordinary banks. But if a flood be turned into them, they know no bounds, but overflow all about them. The increase of wealth and riches enlargeth the desires of men after them beyond all bounds of wisdom, sobriety, or safety. He that labours hard for his daily bread, hath seldom such earnest vehement desires of an addition unto what he hath, as many have who already have more than they know how to use, or almost what to do withal. This they must have more, and the last advantage serves for nothing but to stir them up to look out for another. And yet such men would on other accounts be esteemed good Christians, and spiritually minded, as all good Christians are.

2. They draw the heart to value and esteem them, as those which bring in their satisfaction, and make them to differ from those whom they see to be poor and miserable. Now these things are contrary unto, and where they are habitually prevalent, inconsistent utterly with, being spiritually minded. Nor is it possible, that any who in the least degree are under their power, can ever attain deliverance, unless their thoughts are fixed, and their minds thereby possessed with due apprehensions of invisible things and eternal glory.

These are some few of those many advantages which we may obtain by fixing our thoughts and meditations, and thereby our affections on the things that are above. And there are some things which make me willing to give some few directions for the practice of this duty. For whatever else we are and do, we neither are nor can be truly spiritually minded, whereon life and peace depend,

unless we do really exercise our thoughts unto meditations of things above. Without it all our religion is but vain. And as I fear, men are generally wanting and defective herein in point of practice; so I do also, that many, through the darkness of their minds, the weakness of their intellectuals, and ignorance of the nature of all things unseen, do seldom set themselves unto the contemplation of them. I shall therefore give some few directions for the practice of this duty.

CHAP. VI.

Directions unto the exercise of our thoughts on things above; things future, invisible and eternal; on God himself, with the difficulties of it, and oppositions unto it, and the way of their removal. Right notions of future glory stated.

We have treated in general before of the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts as unto our present duty. That which we were last engaged in, is an especial instance in heavenly things; things future and invisible, with the fountain and spring of them all in Christ and God himself. And because men generally are unskilled herein, and great difficulties arise in the way of the discharge of this part of the duty in hand, I shall give some especial directions concerning it.

1. Possess your minds with right notions and apprehensions of things above, and of the state of future glory. We are in this duty 'to look at the things which are not seen;' 2 Cor. iv. 16. It is faith only whereby we have a prospect of them; for 'we walk by faith and not by sight.' And faith can give us no interest in them, unless we have due apprehensions of them. For it doth but assent and cleave unto the truth of what is proposed unto it. And the greatest part of mankind do both deceive themselves, and feed on ashes in this matter. They fancy a future estate, which hath no foundation but in their own imaginations. Wherefore the apostle, directing us to seek and mind the 'things that are above', adds for the guidance of our thoughts, the consideration of the principal concern-

ment of them, 'where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;' Col. iii. 1, 2. He would lead us unto distinct apprehensions of those heavenly things, especially of the presence of Christ in his exaltation and glory. Wherefore the true notion of these things which we are to possess our minds withal, may here be considered.

All that have an apprehension of a future state of happiness do agree in this matter, that it contains in it, or is accompanied with, a deliverance and freedom from all that is evil. But in what is so, they are not agreed. Many esteem only those things that are grievous, troublesome, wasting and destructive unto nature to be so; that is, what is penal, in pain, sickness, sorrow, loss, poverty, with all kind of outward troubles, and death itself, are evil. Wherefore they suppose that the future state of blessedness will free them from all these things, if they can attain unto it. This they will lay in the balance against the troubles of life, and sometimes it may be against the pleasures of it, which they must forego. Yea, persons profane and profligate, will, in words at least, profess, that heaven will give them rest from all their troubles. But it is no place of rest for such persons.

Unto all others also, unto believers themselves, these things are evil, such as they expect a deliverance from in heaven and glory. And there is no doubt, but it is lawful for us, and meet that we should contemplate on them, as those which will give us a deliverance from all outward troubles, death itself and all that leads thereunto. Heaven is promised 'as rest unto them that are troubled;' 2 Thess. i. 7. It is our duty, under all our sufferings, reproaches, persecutions, troubles, and sorrows, to raise up our minds unto the contemplation of that state, wherein we shall be freed from them all. It is a blessed notion of heaven, 'that God shall therein wipe away all tears from our eyes', Rev. vii. 17. or remove far from us all causes of sorrow. And it would be unto our advantage, if we did accustom our minds more unto this kind of relief than we do; if upon the incursion of fears, dangers, sorrows, we did more readily retreat unto thoughts of that state wherein we shall be freed from them all; even this most inferior consideration of it, would render the thoughts of it more

familiar, and the thing itself more useful unto us. Much better it were, than on such occasions to be exercised with heartless complaints, uncertain hopes, and fruitless contrivances.

But there is that which unto them who are truly spiritually minded, hath more evil in it than all these things together, and that is sin. Heaven is a state of deliverance from sin, from all sin, in all the causes, concomitants, and effects of it. He is no true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble. Other things, as the loss of dear relations, or extraordinay pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind by its natural affections at some seasons, than ever our sins did at any one time, in any one instance. So a man may have a greater trouble in sense of pain, by a fit of the tooth ache, which will be gone in an hour, than in a hectic fever or consumption, which will assuredly take away his life. But take in the whole course of our lives, and all the actings of our souls in spiritual judgment, as well as natural affection, and I do not understand how a man can be a sincere believer, unto whom sin is not the greatest burden and sorrow.

Wherefore, in the first place, it belongs unto the true notion of heaven, that it is a state wherein we shall be eternally freed from sin, and all the concernments of it, but only the exaltation of the glory of God's grace in Christ, by the pardon of it. He that truly hates sin and abhors it, whose principal desire and design of life is to be freed from it, so far as it is possible; who walks in self abasement through a sense of his many disappointments, when he hoped it should act in him no more, cannot, as I judge, but frequently betake himself for refreshment unto thoughts of that state wherein he shall be freed from it and triumph over it unto eternity. This is a notion of heaven that is easily apprehended and fixed on the mind, which we may dwell upon, unto the great advantage and satisfaction of our souls.

Frequent thoughts and meditations of heaven under this notion, do argue a man to be spiritually minded. For it is a convining evidence that sin is a burden unto him, that he longs to be delivered from it and all its consequents; that

no thoughts are more welcome unto him, than those of that state wherein sin shall be no more. And although men are troubled about their sins, and would desirously be freed from them, so far as they perplex their minds, and make their consciences uneasy; yet if they are not much in the prospect of this relief, if they find not refreshment in it, I fear their trouble is not such as it ought to be. Wherefore, when men can so wrangle and wrestle with their convictions of sin, and yet take up the best of their relief in hopes that it will be better with them at some time or other in this world, without longing desires after that state wherein sin shall be no more, they can give no evidence that they are spiritually minded.

It is quite otherwise with sincere believers in the exercise of this duty. The considerations of the grace and love of God, of the blood of Christ, of the purity and holiness of that good Spirit that dwelleth in them, of the light, grace, and mercy which they have attained through the promises of the gospel, are those which make the remainders of sin most grievous and burdensome unto them. This is that which even breaks their hearts, and makes some of them go mourning all the day long, namely, that any thing of that which alone God hates should be found in them, or be remaining with them. It is in this condition an evidence that they are spiritually minded, if together with watchful endeavours for the universal mortification of sin, and utter excision of it, both root and branch, they constantly add these thoughts of that blessed state wherein they shall be absolutely and eternally freed from all sin, with refreshment, delight, and complacency.

These things belong unto our direction for the fixing of our thoughts and meditations on things above. This the meanest and weakest person who hath the least spark of sincerity and grace is capable of apprehending, and able to practise. And it is that which the sense they have of the evil of sin will put them on every day, if they shut not their eyes against the light of the refreshment that is in it. Let them who cannot arise in their minds unto fixed and stable thoughts of any other notion of these invisible things, dwell on this consideration of them, wherein they will find no small spiritual advantage and refreshment unto their souls.

2. As unto the positive part of this glorious future state, the thoughts and apprehensions of men are very various. And that we may know as well what to avoid, as what to embrace, we shall a little reflect on some of them.

1. Many are able to entertain no rational conceptions about a future state of blessedness and glory, no notions wherein either faith or reason is concerned. Imagination they have of something that is great and glorious, but what it is they know not. No wonder if such persons have no delight in, no use of, thoughts of heaven. When their imaginations have fluctuated up and down in all uncertainties for awhile, they are swallowed up in nothing. Glorious and therefore desirable they take it for granted that it must be. But nothing can be so unto them, but what is suitable unto their present dispositions, inclinations, and principles. And hereof there is nothing in the true spiritual glory of heaven, or in the eternal enjoyment of God. These things are not suited unto the wills of their minds and of the flesh, and therefore they cannot rise up unto any constant desires of them. Hence, to please themselves, they begin to imagine what is not. But whereas what is truly heaven pleaseth them not, and what doth please them is not heaven, nor there to be found; they seldom or never endeavour in good earnest to exercise their thoughts about it.

It were well if darkness and ignorance of the true nature of the future state and eternal glory, did not exceedingly prejudice believers themselves, as unto their delight in them and meditations about them. They have nothing fixed or stated in their minds, which they can betake themselves unto in their thoughts when they would contemplate about them. And by the way, whatever doth divert the minds of men from the power and life of spiritual worship, as do all pompous solemnities in the performance of it, doth greatly hinder them as unto right conceptions of our future state. There was a promise of eternal life given unto the saints under the Old Testament: but whereas they were obliged unto a worship that was carnal and outwardly pompous, they never had clear and distinct apprehensions of the future state of glory; for 'life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel.' Wherefore, although no man living can see or find out the infinite riches of eternal glory; yet it is

the duty of all to be acquainted with the nature of it in general, so as that they may have fixed thoughts of it, love unto it, earnest desires after it, all under its own true and proper notion.

2. So great a part of mankind as the Mahometans, unto whom God hath given all the principal and most desirable parts of the world to inhabit and possess, do conceive the state of future blessedness to consist in the full satisfaction of their sensual lusts and pleasures. And evidence this is, that the religion which they profess, hath no power or efficacy on their minds to change them from the love of sin, or placing their happiness in fulfilling the desires of the flesh. It doth not at all enlighten their minds to discern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections unto the love of them, nor free the soul to look after blessedness in such things as alone are suited unto its rational constitution. For if it did, they would place their happiness and blessedness in them. Wherefore, it is nothing but an artifice of the god of this world to blind the eyes of men unto their eternal destruction.

3. Some of the philosophers of old did attain an apprehension that the blessedness of men in another world doth consist in the soul's full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the divine nature. And there is a truth in this notion which contemplative men have adorned with excellent and rational discourses. And sundry who have been, and are learned among Christians, have greatly improved this truth, by the light of the Scripture. From reason they take up with thoughts of the goodness, the amiableness, the self-sufficiency, the all-sufficient satisfactoriness of the infinite perfections of the divine nature. These things shine in themselves with such a glorious light, as that there is no more required unto a perception of them, but that men do not wilfully shut their eyes against it, through bestial sensuality and love of sin. From reason also do they frame their conceptions concerning the capacity of the souls of men for the immediate enjoyment of God, and what is suited therein unto their utmost blessedness. No more is required unto these things, but a due consideration of the nature of God and man, with our relation unto him and dependance on him. By the light of the Scripture they frame these things

into that which they call the beatifical vision, whereby they intend all the ways whereby God in the highest and immediate instances, can and doth communicate of himself unto the souls of men, and the utmost elevation of their intellectual capacities to receive those communications. It is such an intellectual apprehension of the divine nature and perfections, with ineffable love, as gives the soul the utmost rest and blessedness which its capacities can extend unto.

These things are so; and they have been by many both piously and elegantly illustrated. Howbeit they are above the capacities of ordinary Christians, they know not how to manage them in their minds, nor exercise their thoughts about them. They cannot reduce them unto present usefulness, nor make them subservient unto the exercise and increase of grace. And the truth is, the Scripture gives us another notion of heaven and glory, not contrary unto this, not inconsistent with it, but more suited unto the faith and experience of believers, and which alone can convey a true and useful sense of these things unto our minds. This therefore is diligently to be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections.

4. The principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness, and which the meanest believers are capable of improving in daily practice, is, that faith shall be turned into sight, and grace into glory. 'We walk now by faith and not by sight,' saith the apostle; 2 Cor. v. 7. Wherefore this is the difference between our present and our future state, that sight hereafter shall supply the room of faith; 1 John iii. 2. And if sight come into the place of faith, then the object of that sight must be the same with the present object of our faith. So the apostle informs us, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. 12. 'For we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face.' Those things which we now see darkly as in a glass, we shall then have an immediate sight and full comprehension of; for that which is perfect must come and do away that which is in part. What then is the principal present object of faith as it is evangelical, into whose room sight must succeed? Is it not the manifestation of the glory of the infinite wisdom,

grace, love, kindness, and power of God in Christ, the revelation of the eternal counsels of his will, and the ways of their accomplishment unto the eternal salvation of the church in and by him; with the glorious exaltation of Christ himself? Wherefore, in the full satisfactory representation of these things unto our souls, received by sight or a direct immediate intuition of them, doth the glory of heaven principally consist. We behold them now darkly as in a glass; that is, the utmost which by faith we can attain unto; in heaven they shall be openly and fully displayed. The infinite incomprehensible excellencies of the divine nature are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our faith, nor shall they be so unto sight in heaven. The manifestation of them in Christ is the immediate object of our faith here, and shall be of our sight hereafter. Only through this manifestation of them we are led even by faith ultimately to acquiesce in them; as we shall in heaven be led by love perfectly to adhere unto them with delight ineffable. This is our immediate objective glory in heaven; we hope for no other. And this, if God will, I shall shortly more fully explain.

Whoever lives in the exercise of faith, and hath any experience of the life, power, and sweetness of these heavenly things, unto whom they are a spring of grace and consolation, they are able to meditate on the glory of them in their full enjoyment. Think much of heaven, as that which will give you a perfect view and comprehension of the wisdom, and love, and grace of God in Christ, with those other things which shall be immediately declared.

Some perhaps will be ready to say, that if this be heaven, they can see no great glory in it, no such beauty as for which it should be desired. It may be so, for some have no instrument to take a view of invisible things but carnal imaginations. Some have no light, no principle, no disposition of mind or soul, whereunto these things are either acceptable or suitable. Some will go no further in the consideration of the divine excellencies of God, and the faculties and actings of our souls, than reason will guide them, which may be of use. But we look for no other heaven, we desire none, but what we are led unto and prepared for by the light of the gospel; that which shall perfect all the beginnings of

God's grace in us; not what shall be quite of another nature and destructive of them. We value not that heaven which is equally suited unto the desires and inclinations of the worst of men as well as of the best; for we know that they who like not grace here, neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. No man who is not acquainted experimentally in some measure, with the life, power, and evidence of faith here, hath any other heaven in his aim, but what is erected in his own imagination. The glory of heaven which the gospel prepares us for, which faith leads and conducts us unto, which the souls of believers long after, as that which will give full rest, satisfaction, and complacency, is the full, open, perfect manifestation of the glory of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God in Christ, in his person and mediation, with the revelation of all his counsels concerning them, and the communication of their effects unto us. He that likes it not, unto whom it is not desirable, may betake himself unto Mahomet's paradise, or the philosopher's speculations, in the gospel heaven he hath no interest. These are the things which we see now darkly as in a glass, by faith; in the view of them are our souls gradually changed into the likeness of God; and the comprehension of them is that which shall give us our utmost conformity and likeness unto him whereof our natures are capable. In a sense and experience of their reality and goodness given us by the Holy Ghost, do all our spiritual consolations and joys consist. The effects produced by them in our souls are the first fruits of glory. Our light, sense, experience, and enjoyment of these things, however weak and frequently interrupted, our apprehensions of them, however dark and obscure, are the only means whereby we are 'made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.'

To have the eternal glory of God in Christ, with all the fruits of his wisdom and love, whilst we are ourselves under the full participation of the effects of them, immediately, directly, revealed, proposed, made known unto us, in a divine and glorious light, our souls being furnished with a capacity to behold and perfectly comprehend them, this is the heaven which according unto God's promise we look for. But as was said, these things shall be elsewhere more fully treated of.

It is true, that there are sundry other things in particular

that belong unto this state of glory. But what we have mentioned is the fountain and spring of them all. We can never have an immediate enjoyment of God in the immensity of his nature, nor can any created understanding conceive any such things. God's communications of himself unto us, and our enjoyment of him, shall be in and by the manifestation of his glory in Christ. He who can see no glory, who is sensible of no blessedness in these things, is a stranger unto that heaven which the Scripture reveals, and which faith leads unto.

It may be inquired, what is the subjective glory, or what change is to be wrought in ourselves that we may enjoy this glory? Now that consists principally as unto our souls in the perfection of all grace, which is initially wrought and subjectively resides in us in this world. The grace which we have here, shall not be done away as unto its essence and nature, though somewhat of it shall cease as unto the manner of its operation. What soul could think with joy of going to heaven, if thereby he must lose all his present light, faith, and love of God, though he be told that he should receive that in lieu of them, which is more excellent, whereof he hath no experience, nor can understand of what nature it is. When the saints enter into rest, their good works do follow them; and how can they do so, if their grace do not accompany them, from whence they proceed? The perfection of our present graces, which are here weak and interrupted in their operations, is a principal eminency of the state of glory. Faith shall be heightened into vision, as was proved before, which doth not destroy its nature, but cause it to cease as unto its manner of operation towards things invisible. If a man have a weak small faith in this life, with little evidence, and no assurance, so that he doubts of all things, questions all things, and hath no comfort from what he doth believe; if afterward, through supplies of grace, he hath a mighty prevailing evidence of the things believed, is filled with comfort and assurance; this is not by a faith or grace of another kind than what he had before; but by the same faith raised unto a higher degree of perfection. When our Saviour cured the blind man, and gave him his sight, Mark viii. at first he saw all things obscurely and imperfectly, he saw 'men as trees walking;' ver. 24. but on another applica-

tion of virtue unto him, he saw all things clearly, ver. 25. It was not a sight of another kind which he then received, than what he had at first; only its imperfection whereby he 'saw men like trees walking,' was taken away. Nor will our perfect vision of things above, be a grace absolutely of another kind from the light of faith which we here enjoy; only what is imperfect in it will be done away, and it will be made meet for the present enjoyment of things here at a distance and invisible. Love shall have its perfection also, and the least alteration in its manner of operation of any grace whatever. And there is nothing that should more excite us to labour after a growth in love to God in Christ, than this, that it shall to all eternity be the same in its nature and in all its operations, only both the one and the other shall be made absolutely perfect. The soul will by it be enabled to cleave unto God unchangeably, with eternal delight, satisfaction, and complacency. Hope shall be perfect in enjoyment, which is all the perfection it is capable of. So shall it be as unto other graces.

This subjective perfection of our nature, especially in all the faculties, powers, and affections of our souls, and all their operations, belongs unto our blassedness, nor can we be blessed without it. All the objective glory in heaven would not in our beholding and enjoyment of it (if it were possible) make us blessed and happy, if our own natures were not made perfect, freed from all disorder, irregular motions, and weak imperfect operations. What is it then that must give our nature this subjective perfection? It is that grace alone whose beginnings we are here made partakers of. For therein consists the renovation of the image of God in us. And the perfect communication of that image unto us, is the absolute perfection of our natures; the utmost which their capacity is suited unto. And this gives us the last thing to be inquired into, namely, by what means in ourselves we shall eternally abide in that state. And this is by the unalterable adherence of our whole souls unto God, in perfect love and delight. This is that whereby alone the soul reacheth unto the essence of God, and the infinite incomprehensible perfections of his nature. For the perfect nature hereof, divine revelation hath left it under a veil, and so must we do also. Nor do I designedly handle these things in this place

but only in the way of a direction how to exercise our thoughts about them.

This is the notion of heaven which those who are spiritually minded ought to be conversant withal. And the true stating of it by faith, is a discriminating character of believers. This is no heaven unto any others. Those who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in their initial state in this world, and their incomparable transcendency unto all other things, cannot conceive how heavenly glory and blessedness should consist in them. Unskilful men may cast away rough unwrought diamonds as useless stones; they know not what polishing will bring them unto. Nor do men unskilful in the mysteries of godliness, judge there can be any glory in rough unwrought grace; they know not what lustre and beauty the polishing of the heavenly hand will give unto it.

It is generally supposed that however men differ in and about religion here, yet they agree well enough about heaven; they would all go to the same heaven. But it is a great mistake, they differ in nothing more; they would not all go to the same heaven. How few are they who value that heavenly state which we have treated of; or do understand how any blessedness can consist in the enjoyment of it? But this and no other heaven would we go unto. Other notions there may be, there are, of it, which being but fruits and effects of men's own imaginations, the more they dwell in the contemplation of them, the more carnal they may grow, at best the more superstitious. But spiritual thoughts of this heaven, consisting principally in freedom from all sin, in the perfection of all grace in the vision of the glory of God in Christ, and all the excellencies of the divine nature as manifested in him, are an effectual means for the improvement of spiritual life, and the increase of all graces in us. For they cannot but effect an assimilation in the mind and heart unto the things contemplated on, where the principles and seeds of them are already inlaid and begun. This is our first direction.

2. Having fixed right notions and apprehensions of heavenly things in our minds, it is our duty to think and contemplate greatly on them, and our own concernment in them. Without this all our speculations concerning the

nature of eternal things, will be of no use unto us. And unto your encouragement and direction, take these few short rules relating unto this duty. 1. Here lies the great trial whether we are spiritually minded or no, by virtue of this rule; 'If we are risen with Christ, we will mind the things that are above;' Col. iii. 3. 2. Here lies the great means whereby we may attain farther degrees in that blessed frame of mind, if it be already formed in us, by virtue of that rule; 'Beholding the glory of God as in a glass, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory;' 2 Cor. iii. 18. (3.) Here lies the great evidence whether we have a real interest in the things above or no: whether we place our portion and blessedness in them by virtue of that rule; 'Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.' Are they our treasure, our portion, our reward, in comparison whereof all other things are but loss and dung? we shall assuredly be conversant in our minds about them. (4.) It cannot be imagined, that a man should have in him a principle cognate and suited unto things above, of the same kind and nature with them, that his soul should be under the conduct of those habits of grace, which strive and naturally tend unto perfection, labouring greatly here under the weight of their own weaknesses, as it is with all who are truly spiritually minded, and yet not have his thoughts greatly exercised about these things; 1 John iii. 3.

It were well if we would try ourselves by things of so uncontrollable evidence. What can any object unto the truth of these things, or the necessity of this duty? If it be otherwise with us, it is from one of these two causes; either we are not convinced of the truth and reality of them, or we have no delight in them, because we are not spiritually minded. Do we think that men may turmoil themselves in earthly thoughts all the day long, and when they are freed of their affairs, betake themselves unto those that are vain and useless, without any stated converse with things above, and yet enjoy life and peace? We must take other measures of things, if we intend to live unto God, to be like him, and to come unto the enjoyment of him.

What is the matter with men that are so stupid? They all generally desire to go to heaven, at least when they can live here no longer. Some indeed have no other regard unto

it, but only that they would not go to hell. But most would 'die the death of the righteous,' and have their latter end like his; yet few there are who endeavour to attain a right notion of it, to try how it is suited unto their principles and desires; but content themselves with such general notions of it as please their imaginations. It is no wonder if such persons seldom exercise their minds or thoughts about it, nor do they so much as pretend to be spiritually minded. But as for those who are instructed in these things, who profess their chiefest interest to lie in them, not to abound in meditation concerning them, it argues indeed that whatever they profess, they are earthly and carnal.

Again; meditate and think of the glory of heaven, so as to compare it with the opposite state of death and eternal misery. Few men care to think much of hell, and the everlasting torments of the wicked therein. Those do so least, who are in the most danger of falling thereinto. They put far from them the evil day, and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be sure. Some begin to advance an opinion that there is no such place, because it is their interest and desire that there should be none. Some out of profaneness make a scoff at it, as though a future judgment were but a fable. Most seem to think that there is a severity in thoughts about it, which it is not fit we should be too much terrified withal. Some transient thoughts they will have of it, but not suffer them to abide in their minds, lest they should be too much discomposed. Or they think it not consistent with the goodness of Christ to leave any men in that condition; whereas there is more spoken directly of hell, its torments and their eternity, by himself, than in all the Scripture besides. These thoughts in most proceed from an unwillingness to be troubled in their sins, and are useful unto none. It is the height of folly for men to endeavour the hiding of themselves for a few moments from that which is unavoidably coming upon them unto eternity; and the due consideration whereof, is a means for an escape from it. But I speak only of true believers. And the more they are conversant in their thoughts about the future estate of eternal misery, the greater evidence they have of the life and confidence of faith. It is a necessary duty to consider

it, as what we were by nature obnoxious unto, as being children of wrath; what we have deserved by our personal sins, as 'the wages of sin is death;' what we are delivered from through Jesus the Deliverer, who saves us from the wrath to come; what expression it is of the indignation of God against sin, who hath prepared this Tophet of old; that we may be delivered from sin, kept up to an abhorrency of it, walking in humility, self-abasement, and the admiration of divine grace. This therefore is required of us, that in our thoughts and meditations, we compare the state of blessedness and eternal glory, as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God in and through Christ Jesus, with that state of eternal misery, which we had deserved. And if there be any spark of grace or of holy thankfulness in our hearts, it will be stirred up unto its due exercise.

Some it may be will say, that they complained before that they cannot get their minds fixed on these things. Weakness, weariness, darkness, diversions, occasions, do prevalently obstruct their abiding in such thoughts. I shall speak farther unto this afterward. At present I shall only suggest two things. 1. If you cannot attain, yet continue to follow after; get your minds in a perpetual endeavour after an abode in spiritual thoughts. Let your minds be rising towards them every hour; yea, a hundred times a day, on all occasions, on a continual sense of duty; and sigh within yourselves for deliverance, when you find disappointments, or not a continuance in them. It is the sense of that place, Rom. viii. 23—26. 2. Take care you go not backwards and lose what you have wrought. If you neglect these things for a season, you will quickly find yourselves neglected by them. So I observe it every day in the hearing of the word. Whilst persons keep up themselves to a diligent attendance on it where they find it preached unto their edification, they find great delight in it, and will undergo great difficulties for the enjoyment of it: let them be diverted from it for a season, after a while it grows indifferent unto them, any thing will satisfy them that pretends unto the same duty.

CHAP. VII.

Especial objects of spiritual thoughts on the glorious state of heaven, and what belongs thereunto. First, of Christ himself. Thoughts of heavenly glory, in opposition unto thoughts of eternal misery. The use of such thoughts. Advantage in sufferings.

It will be unto our advantage, having stated right notions of the glory of the blessed state above in our minds, to fix on some particulars belonging unto it, as the especial object of our thoughts and meditations. As, 1. Think much of him who unto us is the life and centre of all the glory of heaven, that is, Christ himself. I shall be very brief in treating hereof, because I have designed a peculiar treatise on this subject, of beholding the glory of Christ, both here and unto eternity. At present, therefore, a few things only shall be mentioned, because on this occasion they are not to be omitted. The whole of the glory of the state above is expressed by 'being ever with the Lord; where he is, to behold his glory.' For in and through him is the beatifical manifestation of God and his glory made for evermore. And through him are all communications of inward glory unto us. The present resplendency of heavenly glory, consists in his mediatory ministry, as I have at large elsewhere declared. And he will be the means of all glorious communications between God and the church unto eternity. Wherefore, if we are spiritually minded, we should fix our thoughts on Christ above, as the centre of all heavenly glory. To help us herein we may consider the things that follow.

1. Faith hath continual recourse unto him on the account of what he did and suffered for us in this world. For thereon, pardon of sin, justification, and peace with God do depend. This ariseth in the first place from a sense of our own wants. But love of him is no less necessary unto us than faith in him. And although we have powerful motives unto love, from what he did and was in this world, yet the formal reason of our adherence unto him thereby is what he is in himself, as he is now exalted in heaven. If we rejoice not at the remembrance of his present glory, if the thoughts

of it be not frequent with us and refreshing unto us, how dwelleth his love in us?

2. Our hope is that ere long we shall be ever with him. And if so, it is certainly our wisdom and duty to be here with him as much as we can. It is a vain thing for any to suppose that they place their chiefest happiness in being for ever in the presence of Christ, who care not at all to be with him here as they may. And the only way of our being present with him here, is by faith and love, acting themselves in spiritual thoughts and affections. And it is an absurd thing for men to esteem themselves Christians, who scarce think of Christ all the day long. Yet some, as one complained of old, scarce ever think or speak of him but when they swear by his name. I have read of them who have lived and died in continual contemplation on him, so far as the imperfection of our present state will admit. I have known them, I do know them, who call themselves unto a reproof if at any time he hath been many minutes out of their thoughts. And it is strange that it should be otherwise with them who love him in sincerity; yet I wish I did not know more, who give evidences that it is a rare thing for them to be exercised in serious thoughts and meditations about him. Yea, there are some who are not averse upon occasions to speak of God, of mercy, of pardon, of his power and goodness, who, if you mention Christ unto them, with any thing of faith, love, trust in him, they seem unto them as a strange thing. Few there are who are sensible of any religion beyond what is natural. The things of the wisdom and power of God in Christ, are foolishness unto them. Take some directions for the discharge of this duty. 1. In your thoughts of Christ be very careful that they are conceived and directed according to the rule of the word, lest you deceive your own souls, and give up the conduct of your affections unto vain imaginations. Spiritual notions befalling carnal minds, did once by the means of superstition ruin the power of religion. A conviction men had that they must think much of Jesus Christ, and that this would make them conformable unto him; but having no real evangelical faith, nor the wisdom of faith to exercise it in their thoughts and affections in a due manner, nor understanding what it was to be truly like unto him, they gave up themselves unto

many foolish inventions and imaginations, by which they thought to express their love and conformity unto him. They would have images of him, which they would embrace, adore, and bedew with their tears. They would have crucifixes, as they called them, which they would carry about them, and wear next unto their hearts, as if they resolved to lodge Christ always in their bosoms. They would go in pilgrimage to the place where he died and rose again, through a thousand dangers; and purchase a feigned chip of a tree whereon he suffered, at the price of all they had in the world. They would endeavour, by long thoughtfulness, fastings, and watchings, to cast their souls into raptures and ecstasies, wherein they fancied themselves in his presence. They came at last to make themselves like him, in getting impressions of wounds, on their sides, their hands and feet. Unto all these things and sundry others of a like nature and tendency, did superstition abuse, and corrupt the minds of men, from a pretence of a principle of truth; for there is no more certain gospel truth than this, that believers ought continually to contemplate on Christ, by the actings of faith in their thoughts and affections; and that thereby they are changed and transformed 'into his image;' 2 Cor. iii. 18. And we are not to forego our duty, because other men have been mistaken in theirs; nor part with practical fundamental principles of religion, because they have been abused by superstition. But we may see herein, how dangerous it is to depart in any thing from the conduct of Scripture light and rule, when for want thereof the best and most noble endeavours of the minds of men, even to love Christ and to be like unto him, do issue in provocations of the highest nature.

Pray, therefore, that you may be kept unto the truth in all things, by a diligent attendance unto the only rule thereof, and conscientious subjection of soul unto the authority of God in it. For we ought not to suffer our affections to be entangled with the paint or artificial beauty of any way or means of giving our love unto Christ, which are not warranted by the word of truth. Yet I must say, that I had rather be among them who, in the actings of their love and affections unto Christ, do fall into some irregularities and excesses in the manner of expressing it (provided their worship of him be neither superstitious nor idolatrous), than among

those who, professing themselves to be Christians, do almost disavow their having any thoughts of or affection unto the person of Christ: but there is no need that we should foolishly run into either of these extremes. God hath in the Scripture sufficiently provided against them both. He hath both shewed us the necessity of our diligent acting of faith and love on the person of Christ; and hath limited out the way and means whereby we may so do; and let our designs be what they will, where in any thing we depart from his prescriptions, we are not under the conduct of his Spirit, and so are sure to lose all that we do.

Wherefore two things are required that we may thus think of Christ and meditate on him according to the mind and will of God. 1. That the means of bringing him to mind, be what God hath promised and appointed. 2. That the continued proposal of him, as the object of our thoughts and meditations, be of the same kind. For both these ends, the superstitious minds of men invented the ways of images and crucifixes, with their appurtenances before mentioned. And this rendered all their devotion an abomination. That which tends unto these ends among believers, is the promise of the Spirit; and the institutions of the word. Would you then think of Christ as you ought; take these two directions. (1.) Pray that the Holy Spirit may abide with you continually, to mind you of him, which he will do in all in whom he doth abide; for it belongs unto his office. (2.) For more fixed thoughts and meditations; take some express place of Scripture, wherein he is set forth and proposed either in his person, office, or grace unto you; Gal. iii. 1.

4. This duty lies at the foundation of all that blessed communion and intercourse that is between Jesus Christ and the souls of believers. This I confess is despised by some, and the very notion of it esteemed ridiculous. But they do therein no less than renounce Christianity, and turn the Lord Christ into an idol, that neither knoweth, seeth, nor heareth. But I speak unto them who are not utter strangers unto the life of faith, who know not what religion is, unless they have real spiritual intercourse and communion with the Lord Christ thereby. Consider this, therefore, as it is in particular exemplified in the book of Canticles. There is not one instance of it to be found, which doth not sup-

pose a continued thoughtfulness of him. And in answer unto them, as they are actings of faith and love wherein he is delighted, doth he by his Spirit insinuate into our minds and hearts, a gracious sense of his own love, kindness, and relation unto us. The great variety wherein these things are mutually carried on between him and the church, the singular endearments which ensue thereon, and blessed estate in rest and complacency, do make up the substance of that holy discourse. No thoughts then of Christ, proceeding from faith, accompanied with love and delight, shall be lost: they that sow this seed, shall return with their sheaves; Christ will meet them with gracious intimations of his acceptance of them, delight in them, and return a sense of his own love unto them. He never will be, he never was, behind with any poor soul in returns of love. Those gracious and blessed promises which he hath made of coming unto them that believe in him, of making his abode with them, and of supping with them, all expressions of a gracious presence and intimate communion, do all depend on this duty. Wherefore, we may consider three things concerning these thoughts of Christ. 1. That they are exceeding acceptable unto him, as the best pledges of our cordial affection. Cant. ii. 14. 'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.' When a soul through manifold discouragements and despondencies withdraws, and as it were hides itself from him, he calleth to see a poor weeping, blubbered face, and to hear a broken voice, that scarce goes beyond sighs and groans. 2. These thoughts are the only means, whereby we comply with the gracious intimations of his love mentioned before. By them do we hear his knocking, know his voice, and open the door of our hearts to give him entrance, that he may abide and sup with us. Sometimes indeed the soul is surprised into acts of gracious communion with Christ, Cant vi. 11. But they are not to be expected unless we abide in those ways and means which prepare and make our souls meet for the reception and entertainment of him. Wherefore, 3. Our want of experience in the power of this holy intercourse and communion with Christ, ariseth principally from our defect in this duty. I have known one who

after a long profession of faith and holiness, fell into great darkness and distress, merely on this account, that he did not experience in himself, the sweetness, life, and power of the testimonies given concerning the real communications of the love of Christ unto, and the intimation of his presence with, believers. He knew well enough the doctrine of it, but did not feel the power of it; at least he understood there was more in it, than he had experience of. God carried him by faith through that darkness; but taught him withal, that no sense of these things was to be let into the soul, but by constant thoughtfulness and contemplations on Christ. How many blessed visits do we lose, by not being exercised unto this duty. See Cant. v. 1—3. Sometimes we are busy, sometimes careless and negligent, sometimes slothful, sometimes under the power of temptations, so that we neither inquire after, nor are ready to receive, them. This is not the way to have our joys abound.

Again, I speak now with especial respect unto him in heaven. The glory of his presence as God and man eternally united, the discharge of his mediatory office, as he is at the right hand of God, the glory of his present acting for the church, as he is the minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which God hath fixed and not man, the love, power, and efficacy of his intercession, whereby he takes care for the accomplishment of the salvation of the church, the approach of his glorious coming unto judgment, are to be the objects of our daily thoughts and meditations.

Let us not mistake ourselves. To be spiritually minded is not to have the notions and knowledge of spiritual things in our minds; it is not to be constant, no not to abound, in the performance of duties, both which may be where there is no grace in the heart at all. It is to have our minds really exercised with delight about heavenly things, the things that are above, especially Christ himself as at the right hand of God.

Again, so think of eternal things as continually to lay them in the balance against all the sufferings of this life. This use of it I have spoken unto somewhat before; and it is necessary it should be pressed upon all occasions. It is very probable that we shall yet suffer more than we have

done. Those who have gone before us, have done so; it is foretold in the Scripture, that if we will 'live godly in Christ Jesus, we must do so;' we stand in need of it, and the world is prepared to bring it on us. And as we must suffer, so it is necessary unto the glory of God, and our own salvation that we suffer in a due manner. Mere sufferings will neither commend us unto God, nor any way advantage our own souls. When we suffer according to the will of God, it is an eminent grace, gift, and privilege, Psal. i. 29. But many things are required hereunto. It is not enough that men suppose themselves to suffer for conscience sake, though if we do not so, all our sufferings are in vain. Nor is it enough that we suffer for this or that way of profession in religion, which we esteem to be true and according to the mind of God, in opposition unto what is not so. The glory of sufferings on these accounts solely, hath been much sullied in the days wherein we live. It is evident that persons out of a natural courage, accompanied with deep radicate persuasions, and having their minds influenced with some sinister ends, may undergo things hard and difficult, in giving testimony unto what is not according to the mind of God. Examples we have had hereof in all ages, and in that wherein we live in an especial manner. See 1 Pet. iv. 14—16. We have had enough to take off all paint and appearance of honour from them who in their sufferings are deceived in what they profess. But men may from the same principles suffer for what is indeed according to the mind of God, yea may give their bodies to be burned therein, and yet not to his glory nor their own eternal advantage. Wherefore we are duly to consider all things that are requisite to make our sufferings acceptable unto God and honourable unto the gospel.

I have observed in many a frame of spirit with respect unto sufferings, that I never saw good event of when it was tried to the uttermost. Boldness, confidence, a pretended contempt of hardships, and scorning other men whom they suppose defective in these things, are the garments or livery they wear on this occasion. Such principles may carry men out in a bad cause, they will never do so in a good. Evangelical truth will not be honourably witnessed unto, but by evangelical graces. Distrust of ourselves, a due apprehen-

sion of the nature of the evils to be undergone, and of our own frailty, with continual prayers to be delivered from them, or supported under them, and prudent care to avoid them without an inroad on conscience, or neglect of duty, are much better preparations for an entrance into a state of suffering. Many things belong unto our learning aright this first and last lesson of the gospel, namely, of bearing the cross, or undergoing all sorts of sufferings for the profession of it. But they belong not unto our present occasion. This only is that which we now press, as an evidence of our sincerity in our sufferings, and an effectual means to enable us cheerfully to undergo them, which is to have such a continual prospect of the future state of glory, so as to lay it in the balance against all that we may undergo. For,

1. To have our minds filled and possessed with thoughts thereof, will give us an alacrity in our entrance into sufferings in a way of duty. Other considerations will offer themselves unto our relief, which will quickly fade and disappear. They are like a cordial water which gives a little relief for a season, and then leaves the spirits to sink beneath what they were before it was taken. Some relieve themselves from the consideration of the nature of their sufferings; they are not so great, but that they may conflict with them and come off with safety. But there is nothing of that kind so small, which will not prove too hard and strong for us, unless we have especial assistance. Some do the same from their duration; they are but for ten days or six months, and then they shall be free. Some from the compassion and esteem of men. These and the like considerations are apt to occur unto the minds of all sorts of persons, whether they are spiritually minded or no. But when our minds are accustomed unto thoughts of the glory that shall be revealed, we shall cheerfully entertain every way and path that leads thereunto; as suffering for the truth doth in a peculiar manner. Through this medium we may look cheerfully and comfortably, on the loss of name, reputation, goods, liberty, life itself; as knowing in ourselves that we have better and more abiding comforts to betake ourselves unto. And we can no other way glorify God by our alacrity in the entrance of sufferings, than when it ariseth from a prospect into and

valuation of those invisible things which he hath promised as an abundant recompense for all we can lose in this world.

2. The great aggravation of sufferings is their long continuance, without any rational appearance or hopes of relief. Many who have entered into sufferings with much courage and resolution, have been wearied and worn out with their continuance. Elijah himself was hereby reduced to pray that God would take away his life, to put an end unto his ministry and calamities. And not a few in all ages have been hereby so broken in their natural spirits, and so shaken in the exercise of faith, as that they have lost the glory of their confession, in seeking deliverance by sinful compliances in the denial of truth. And although this may be done out of mere weariness (as it is the design of Satan to wear out the saints of the Most High) with reluctance of mind, and a love yet remaining unto the truth in their hearts, yet hath it constantly one of these two effects. Some, by the overwhelming sorrow that befalls them on the account of their failure in profession, and out of a deep sense of their unkindness unto the Lord Jesus, are stirred up immediately unto higher acts of confession than ever they were before engaged in, and unto a higher provocation of their adversaries, until their former troubles are doubled upon them, which they frequently undergo with great satisfaction. Instances of this nature occur in all stories of great persecutions. Others being cowed and discouraged in their profession, and perhaps neglected by them whose duty it was rather to restore them, have by the craft of Satan given place to their declensions, and become vile apostates. To prevent these evils arising from the duration of sufferings without a prospect of deliverance, nothing is more prevalent than a constant contemplation on the future reward and glory. So the apostle declares it, Heb. xi. 35. When the mind is filled with the thoughts of the unseen glories of eternity, it hath in readiness what to lay in the balance against the longest continuance and duration of sufferings, which in comparison thereunto at their utmost extent are but for a moment.

I have insisted the longer on these things, because they are the peculiar object of the thoughts of them that are indeed spiritually minded.

CHAP. VIII.

Spiritual thoughts of God himself. The opposition unto them and neglect of them, with their causes and the way of their prevalency. Predominant corruptions expelling due thoughts of God, how to be discovered, &c. Thoughts of God, of what nature, and what they are to be accompanied withal, &c.

I HAVE spoken very briefly unto the first particular instance of the heavenly things, that we are to fix our thoughts upon, namely, the person of Christ. And I have done it on the reason before mentioned, namely, that I intend a peculiar treatise on that subject, or an inquiry how we may behold the glory of Christ in this life, and how we shall do so unto eternity. That which I have reserved unto the last place as unto the exercise of their thoughts about, who are spiritually minded, is that which is the absolute foundation and spring of all spiritual things; namely, God himself. He is the fountain whence all these things proceed, and the ocean wherein they issue; he is their centre and circumference wherein they all begin, meet, and end. So the apostle issues his profound discourse of the councils of the divine will and mysteries of the gospel, Rom. xi. 36. 'Of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever.' All things arise from his power, are all disposed by his wisdom into a tendency unto his glory; 'of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' Under that consideration alone are they to be the objects of our spiritual meditations, namely, as they come from him, and tend unto him. All other things are finite and limited; but they begin and end in that which is immense and infinite. So God is all in all. He therefore is, or ought to be, the only supreme absolute object of our thoughts and desires; other things are from and for him only. Where our thoughts do not either immediately and directly, or mediately and by just consequence tend unto and end in him, they are not spiritual, 1 Pet. i. 21.

To make way for directions how to exercise our thoughts on God himself, some thing must be premised concerning a sinful defect herein, with the causes of it.

First, It is the great character of a man presumptuously

and flagitiously wicked, 'that God is not in all his thoughts;' Psal. x. 4. That is, he is in none of them. And of this want of thoughts of God there are many degrees; for all wicked men are not equally so forgetful of him.

1. Some are under the power of atheistical thoughts: they deny, or question, or do not avowedly acknowledge the very being of God. This is the height of what the enmity of the carnal mind can rise unto. To acknowledge God, and yet to refuse to be subject to his law or will, a man would think were as bad, if not worse, than to deny the being of God. But it is not so. That is a rebellion against his authority, this an hatred unto the only fountain of all goodness, truth, and being; and that because they cannot own it, but withal they must acknowledge it to be infinitely righteous, holy, and powerful, which would destroy all their desires and security. Such may be the person in the psalm; for the words may be read, "All his thoughts are that there is no God.' Howbeit the context describes him as one who rather despiseth his providence, than denieth his being. But such there are whom the same psalmist elsewhere brands for fools, though themselves seem to suppose that wisdom was born and will die with them, Psal. xiv. 1. liii. 1.

It may be, never any age since the flood, did more abound with open atheism, among such as pretended unto the use and improvement of reason, than that wherein we live. Among the ancient civilized heathen, we hear ever and anon of a person branded for an atheist; yet are not certain whether it was done justly or no. But in all nations of Europe at this day, cities, courts, towns, fields, armies, abound with persons, who, if any credit may be given unto what they say or do, believe not that there is a God. And the reason hereof may be a little enquired into.

Now this is no other in general, but that men have decocted and wasted the light and power of Christian religion. It is the fullest revelation of God, that ever he made, it is the last that ever he will make in this world. If this be despised, if men rebel against the light of it, if they break the cords of it, and are senseless of its power, nothing can preserve them from the highest atheism that the nature of man is capable of. It is in vain to expect relief

or preservation from inferior means, where the highest and most noble is rejected. Reason or the light of nature gives evidences unto the being of God; and arguments are still well pleaded from them to the confusion of atheists. And they were sufficient to retain men in an acknowledgment of the divine power and Godhead, who had no other, no higher evidences of them. But where men have had the benefit of divine revelation, where they have been educated in the principles of Christian religion, have had some knowledge, and made some profession of them; and have through the love of sin, and hatred of every thing that is truly good, rejected all convictions from them concerning the being, power and rule of God, they will not be kept unto a confession of them by any considerations that the light of nature can suggest.

There are therefore among others, three reasons why there are more atheists among them who live where the Christian religion is professed, and the power of it rejected, than among any other sort of men, even than there were among the heathens themselves.

1. God hath designed to magnify his word above all his name, or all other ways of the revelation of himself unto the children of men, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. Where therefore this is rejected and despised, he will not give the honour unto reason or the light of nature, that they shall preserve the minds of men from any evil whatever. Reason shall not have the same power and efficacy on the minds of men, who reject the light and power of divine revelation by the word, as it hath, or may have, on them whose best guide it is, who never enjoyed the light of the gospel. And therefore there is ofttimes more common honesty among civilized heathens and Mahometans than amongst degenerate Christians. And from the same reason the children of professors are sometimes irrecoverably profligate. It will be said, many are recovered unto God by afflictions, who have despised the word. But it is otherwise; never any were converted unto God by afflictions who had rejected the word. Men may by afflictions be recalled unto the light of the word, but none are immediately turned unto God by them. As a good shepherd, when a sheep wanders from the flock, and will not hear his call, sends out his dog,

which stops him and bites him. Hereon he looks about him, and hearing the call of the shepherd returns again to the flock; Job xxxiii. 19—25. But with this sort of persons it is the way of God, that where the principal means of the revelation of himself, and wherein he doth most glorify his wisdom and his goodness, is despised, he will not only take off the efficacy of inferior means, but judicially harden the hearts and blind the eyes of men, that such means shall be of no use unto them. See Isa. vi. 8—12. Acts xiii. 40, 41. Rom. i. 21. 28. 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

2. The contempt of gospel light and Christian religion, as it is supernatural (which is the beginning of transgression unto all atheists among us), begets in and leaves on the mind such a depraved, corrupt habit, such a congeries of all evils, that the hatred of the goodness, wisdom, and grace of God can produce, that it cannot but be wholly inclined unto the worst of evils, as all our original vicious inclinations succeeded immediately on our rejection and loss of the image of God. The best things corrupted, yield the worst savour; as manna stunk and bred worms. The knowledge of the gospel being rejected, stinking worms take the place of it in the mind, which grow into vipers and scorpions. Every degree of apostacy from gospel-truth, brings in a proportionate degree of inclination unto wickedness into the hearts and minds of men; 2 Pet. ii. 21. and that which is total, unto all the evils that they are capable of in this world. Whereas therefore multitudes, from their darkness, unbelief, temptation, love of sin, pride and contempt of God, do fall off from all subjection of soul and conscience unto the gospel, either notionally or practically, deriding or despising all supernatural revelations; they are a thousand times more disposed unto downright atheism, than persons who never had the light or benefit of such revelations. Take heed of decays. Whatever ground the gospel loseth in our minds, sin possesseth it for itself and its own ends.

Let none say, it is otherwise with them. Men grow cold and negligent in the duties of gospel worship, public and private; which is to reject gospel light. Let them say and pretend what they please, that in other things, in their minds and conversations, it is well with them: indeed it is not so. Sin will, sin doth, one way or other, make an increase in

them proportionate unto these decays; and will sooner or later discover itself so to do. And themselves, if they are not utterly hardened, may greatly discover it, inwardly in their peace, or outwardly in their lives.

3. Where men are resolved not to see, the greater the light is that shines about them, the faster they must close their eyes. All atheism springs from a resolution not to see things invisible and eternal. Love of sin, a resolved continuance in the practice of it, the effectual power of vicious inclinations, in opposition unto all that is good, make it the interest of such men that there should be no God to call them to an account. For a supreme unavoidable judge, an eternal rewarder of good and evil, is inseparable from the first notion of a divine being. Whereas, therefore, the most glorious light and uncontrollable evidence of these things shines forth in the Scripture, men that will abide by their interest to love and live in sin, must close their eyes with all the arts and powers that they have, or else they will pierce into their minds unto their torment. This they do by downright atheism, which alone pretends to give them security against the light of divine revelation. Against all other convictions, they might take shelter from their fears, under less degrees of it.

It is not therefore unto the disparagement, but honour, of the gospel, that so many avow themselves to be atheists, in those places wherein the truth of it is known and professed. For none can have the least inclination or temptation thereunto, until they have beforehand rejected the gospel, which immediately exposeth them unto the worst of evils.

Nor is there any means for the recovery of such persons. The opposition that hath been made unto atheism, with arguments for the divine being and existence of God, taken from reason and natural light, in this and other ages, hath been of good use to cast contempt on the pretences of evil men, to justify themselves in their folly. But that they have so much as changed the minds of any, I much doubt. No man is under the power of atheistical thoughts, or can be so long, but he that is insnared into them by his desire to live securely and uncontrollably in sin. Such persons

it to be their interest, that there should be no God,

willing to take shelter under the bold expressions

and reasonings of them, who by the same means have hardened and blinded their minds into such foolish thoughts. But the most rational arguments for the being of the Deity, will never prove an effectual cure unto a predominant love of, and habitual course in, sin, in them who have resisted and rejected the means and motives unto that end declared in divine revelation. And unless the love of sin be cured in the heart, thoughts in the acknowledgment of God, will not be fixed in the mind.

2. There are those of whom also it may be said, that God is not in all their thoughts, though they acknowledge his essence and being. For they are not practically influenced in any thing by the notions they have of him. Such is the person of whom this is affirmed; Psal. x. 4. He is one who through pride and profligacy with hardness in sin, regards not God in the rule of the world; ver. 4, 5. 11. 13. Such is the world filled withal at this day, as they are described, Tit. i. 16. 'They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.' They think, they live, they act in all things as if there were no God, at least as if they never thought of him with fear and reverence. And for the most part we need not seek far for evidences of their disregard of God; the 'pride of their countenances testify against them;' Psal. x. 4. And if they are followed farther, cursed oaths, licentiousness of life, and hatred of all that is good, will confirm and evidence the same. Such as these may own God in words, may be afraid of him in dangers, may attend outwardly on his worship; but they think not of God at all in a due manner; he is not in all their thoughts.

3. There are yet less degrees of this disregard of God and forgetfulness of him. Some are so filled with thoughts of the world, and the occasions of life, that it is impossible they should think of God as they ought. For as the love of God, and the love of the world, in prevalent degrees, are inconsistent, ('for if a man loveth this world, how dwelleth the love of God in him?') so thoughts of God and of the world, in the like degree, are inconsistent. This is the state of many who yet would be esteemed spiritually minded. They are continually conversant in their minds about earthly things.

Some things impose themselves on them under the notion of duty: they belong unto their callings, they must be attended unto. Some are suggested unto their minds from daily occasions and occurrences. Common converse in the world engageth men into no other but worldly thoughts: love and desire of earthly things, their enjoyment and increase, exhaust the vigour of their spirits all the day long. In the midst of a multitude of thoughts arising from these and the like occasions, whilst their hearts and heads are reeking with the steam of them, many fall immediately in their seasons unto the performance of holy duties. Those times must suffice for thoughts of God. But notwithstanding such duties, what through the want of a due preparation for them, what through the fulness of their minds and affections with other things, and what through a neglect of exercising grace in them, it may be said comparatively, that 'God is not in all their thoughts.'

I pray God, that this, at least, as unto some degrees of it, be not the condition of many among us. I speak not now of men who visibly and openly live in sin, profane in their principles, and profligate in their lives. The prayers of such persons are an abomination unto the Lord; neither have they ever any thoughts of him, which he doth accept: but I speak of them who are sober in their lives, industrious in their callings, and not openly negligent about the outward duties of religion. Such men are apt to approve of themselves, and others also to speak well of them; for these things are in themselves commendable and praiseworthy. But if they are traced home, it will be found as to many of them, that 'God is not in all their thoughts' as he ought to be. Their earthly conversation, their vain communication, with their foolish designs, do all manifest that the vigour of their spirits, and most intense contrivances of their minds, are engaged into things below: some refuse, transient, unmanaged thoughts are sometimes cast away on God, which he despiseth.

4. Where persons do cherish secret predominant lusts in their hearts and lives, God is not in their thoughts as he ought to be. He may be, he often is, much in the words of such persons, but in their thoughts he is not, he cannot be in a due manner. And such persons no doubt there are.

Ever and anon, we hear of one and another whose secret lusts break forth into a discovery. They flatter themselves for a season, but God ofttimes so orders things in his holy providence, that their iniquity shall be found out to be hateful. Some hateful lust discovers itself to be predominant in them: one is drunken, another unclean, a third an oppressor. Such there were ever found among professors of the gospel, and that in the best of times: among the apostles one was a traitor, a devil. Of the first professors of Christianity, there were those 'whose God was their belly, whose end was destruction, who minded earthly things;' Phil. iii. 18, 19. Some may take advantage at this acknowledgment, that there are such evils among such as are called professors. And it must be confessed that great scandal is given hereby unto the world, casting both them that give it, and them to whom it is given, under a most dreadful woe. But we must bear the reproach of it, as they did of old, and commit the issue of all things unto the watchful care of God. However, it is good in such a season to be 'jealous over ourselves and others, to exhort one another daily whilst it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' See Heb. xii. 13—17. And because those with whom it is thus, cannot be spiritually minded, yet are there some difficulties in the case, as unto the predominancy of a secret lust or sin, I shall consider it somewhat more distinctly.

1. We must distinguish between a time of temptation in some, and the ordinary state of mind and affections in others. There may be a season wherein God in his holy wise orderings of all things towards us, and for his own glory, in his holy blessed ends, may suffer a lust or corruption to break loose in the heart, to strive, tempt, suggest, and tumultuate unto the great trouble and disquietude of the mind and conscience. Neither can it be denied, but that falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation, it may proceed so far as to surprise the person in whom it is into actual sin, unto his defilement and amazement. In this case no man can say, he is tempted of God, for God tempteth no man, but every man is tempted of his own lust and enticed. But yet temptations of what sort soever they be, so far as they are afflictive, corrective, or penal, are ordered and disposed by God himself. For there is no evil of that nature, and he

hath not done it: and where he will have the power of any corruption to be afflictive in any instance, two things may safely be ascribed to him.

1. He withholds the supplies of that grace whereby it might be effectually mortified and subdued. He can give in a sufficiency of efficacious grace, to repel any temptation, to subdue any or all our lusts and sins. For he can and doth work in us to will and to do, according to his pleasure. Ordinarily he doth so in them that believe; so that although their lusts may rebel and war, they cannot defile or prevail. But unto the continual supplies of this actual prevailing grace he is not obliged. When it may have a tendency unto his holy ends, he may and doth withhold it. When it may be a proud soul is to be humbled, a careless soul to be awakened, an unthankful soul to be convinced and rebuked, a backsliding soul to be recovered, a froward, selfish, passionate soul to be broken and meekened, he can leave them for a season unto the sore exercise of a prevalent corruption, which under his holy guidance shall contribute greatly unto his blessed ends. It was so in the temptation of Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 7—9. If a man, through disorder and excesses, is contracting many habitual distempers of body, which gradually and insensibly tend unto his death, it may be an advantage to be cast into a violent fever, which threatens immediately to take away his life. For he will hereby be thoroughly awakened unto the consideration of his danger, and not only labour to be freed from his fever, but also for the future to watch against those disorders and excesses which cast him into that condition. And sometimes a loose, careless soul, that walks in a secure formal profession, contracts many spiritual diseases which tend unto death and ruin. No arguments or considerations can prevail with him, to awaken himself, 'to shake himself out of the dust,' and to betake himself unto a more diligent and humble walking before God. In this state, it may be, through the permission of God, he is surprised into some open actual sin. Hereon, through the vigorous actings of an enlightened conscience, and the stirrings of any sparks of grace which yet remain, he is amazed, terrified, and stirs up himself to seek after deliverance.

2. God may and doth, in his providence, administer ob-

jects and occasions of men's lusts for their trial. He will place them in such relations, in such circumstances, as shall be apt to provoke their affections, passions, desires, and inclinations unto those objects that are suited unto them.

In this state any lust will quickly get such power in the mind and affections, as to manage continual solicitations unto sin. It will not only dispose the affections towards it, but multiply thoughts about it, and darken the mind as unto those considerations, which ought to prevail unto its mortification. In this condition it is hard to conceive how God should be in the thoughts of man in a due manner. However, this state is very different from the habitual prevalency of any secret sin or corruption, in the ordinary course of men's walking in the world, and therefore I do not directly intend it.

If any one shall inquire how we may know this difference, namely, that is between the occasional prevalency of any lust or corruption in conjunction with a temptation, and the power of sin in any instance habitually and constantly complied withal, or indulged in the mind; I answer,

1. It is no great matter whether we are able to distinguish between them or no. For the end why God suffers any corruption to be such a snare and temptation, such a thorn and briar, is to awaken the souls of men out of their security, and to humble them for their pride and negligence. The more severe are their apprehensions concerning it, the more effectual it will be unto this end and purpose. It is good, it may be, that the soul should apprehend more of what is sinful in it, as it is a corruption, than of what is afflictive in it, as it is a temptation. For if it be conceived as a predominant lust, if there be any spark of grace remaining in the soul, it will not rest until in some measure it be subdued. It will also immediately put it upon a diligent search into itself, which will issue in deep self-abasement, the principal end designed. But,

2. For the relief of them that may be perplexed in their minds, about their state and condition, I say, there is an apparent difference between these things. A lust or corruption arising up or breaking forth into a violent temptation, is the continual burden, grief, and affliction of the soul wherein it is. And as the temptation for the most part

which befalls such a person will give him no rest from its reiterated solicitations; so he will give the temptation no rest, but will be continually conflicting with it, and contending against it. It fills the soul with an amazement at itself, and continual self-abhorrency, that any such seeds of filth and folly should be yet remaining in it. With them in whom any sin is ordinarily prevalent, it is otherwise. According to their light and renewed occasional convictions, they have trouble about it; they cannot but have so, unless their consciences are utterly seared. But this trouble respects principally, if not solely, its guilt and effects. They know not what may ensue on their compliance with it, in this world and another. Beyond this they like it well enough, and are not willing to part with it. It is of this latter sort of persons of whom we speak at present.

2. We must distinguish between the perplexing solicitation of any lust, and the conquering predominancy of it. The evil that is present with us, will be soliciting and pressing unto sin of its own accord, even where there is no such especial temptation as that spoken of before. So is the case stated, so are the nature and operations of it described, Rom. i. Gal. v. And sometimes an especial particular lust, may be so warmed and fomented by men's constitutions within, or be so exposed unto provoking, exciting occasions without, as to bring perpetual trouble on the mind. Yet this may be where no sin hath the predominancy inquired after. And the difference between the perplexing solicitation of any corruption unto sin, and the conquering prevalency of it, lies in this; that under the former, the thoughts, contrivances, and actings of the mind, are generally disposed and inclined unto an opposition unto it, and a conflict with it, how it may be obviated, defeated, destroyed, how an absolute victory may be obtained against it. Yea, death itself is sweet unto such persons under this notion, as it is that which will deliver them from the perplexing power of their corruptions; so is the state of such a soul at large represented, Rom. i. In the other case, namely, of its predominancy, it disposeth of the thoughts actually, for the most part, to make provision for the flesh, and to fulfil it in the lusts thereof. It fills the mind with pleasing contemplations of its object, and puts it on contri-

vances for satisfaction. Yea, part of the bitterness of death unto such persons is, that it will make an everlasting separation between them and the satisfaction they have received in their lusts. It is bitter in the thoughts of it unto a worldly-minded man, because it will take him from all his enjoyments, his wealth, profits, and advantages. It is so unto the sensual person, as that which finally determines all his pleasures.

3. There is a difference in the degrees of such a predominant corruption. In some it taints the affections, vitiates the thoughts, and works over the will unto acts of a secret complacency in sin, but proceeds no farther. The whole mind may be vitiated by it, and rendered in the multitude of its thoughts, vain, sensual, or worldly, according as is the nature of the prevailing corruption. Yet here God puts bounds unto the raging of some men's corruptions, and says to their proud waves, 'thus far shall ye proceed, and no farther.' He either lays a restraint on their minds, that when lust hath fully conceived, it shall not bring forth sin, or he sets a hedge before them in his providence, that they shall not be able, in their circumstances, to find their way unto what perhaps they do most earnestly desire. A woful life it is that such persons lead. They are continually tortured between their corruptions and convictions, or the love of sin, and fear of the event. With others it pursues its course into outward actual sins, which in some are discovered in this world, in others they are not. For some men's sins go before them unto judgment, and some follow after. Some fall into sin upon surprisal, from a concurrence of temptation with corruption, and opportunities; some habituate themselves unto a course in sin, though in many it be not discovered, in some it is. But among those who have received any spiritual light, and made profession of religion thereon, this seldom falls out, but from the great displeasure of God. For when men have long given way unto the prevalency of sin in their affections, inclinations, and thoughts, and God hath set many a hedge before them to give bounds unto their inclinations, and to shut up the womb of sin; sometimes by afflictions, sometimes by fears and dangers, sometimes by the word; and yet the bent of their spirits is towards their sin; God takes off his hand of

restraint, removes his hinderances, and gives them up unto their own heart's lusts, to do the things that are not convenient. All things hereon suit their desires, and they rush into actual sins and follies, setting their feet in the paths that go down to the chambers of death. The uncontrollable power of sin in such persons, and the greatness of God's displeasure against them, makes their condition most deplorable.

Those that are in this state, of either sort, the first or the latter, are remote from being spiritually minded, nor is God in all their thoughts as he ought to be. For,

1. They will not so think and meditate on God. Their delight is turned another way. Their affections, which are the spring of their thoughts, which feed them continually, do cleave unto the things which are most adverse unto him. Love of sin is gotten to be the spring in them; and the whole stream of the thoughts which they choose and delight in, are towards the pleasures of it. If any thoughts of God come in, as a faint tide for a few minutes, and drive back the other stream, they are quickly repelled and carried away with the strong current of those which proceed from their powerful inclinations. Yet may such persons abide in the performance of outward holy duties; or attendance unto them. Pride of, or satisfaction in, their gifts, may give them delight in their own performances, and something in those of others they may be exceedingly pleased withal; as it is expressly affirmed, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. But in these things they have no immediate real thoughts of God, none that they delight in, none that they seek to stir up in themselves; and those which impose themselves on them they reject.

2. As they will not, so they dare not, think of God. They will not, because of the power of their lusts; they dare not, because of their guilt. No sooner should they begin to think of him in good earnest, but their sin would lose all its desirable forms and appearances, and represent itself in the horror of guilt alone: and in that condition all the properties of the divine nature are suited to increase the dread and terror of the sinner. Adam had heard God's voice before with delight and satisfaction; but on the hearing of the same voice, after he had sinned, he hid himself,

and cried that he was afraid. There is a way for men to think of God with the guilt of sin upon them, which they intend to forsake; but none for any to do it with the guilt of sin which they resolve to continue in. Wherefore of all these sorts of persons it may be said, that God is not in all their thoughts, and therefore are they far enough from being spiritually minded. For unless we have many thoughts of God, we cannot be so. Yea, moreover, there are two things required unto those thoughts which we have of God, that there be an evidence of our being so.

1. That we take delight in them, Psal. xxx. 4. 'Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.' The remembrance of God delighteth and refresheth the hearts of his saints, and stirs them up unto thankfulness.

1. They rejoice in what God is in himself. Whatever is good, amiable, or desirable; whatever is holy, just, and powerful; whatever is gracious, wise, and merciful, and all that is so, they see and apprehend in God. That 'God is what he is,' is the matter of their chiefest joy. Whatever befalls them in this world, whatever troubles and disquietment they are exercised withal, the remembrance of God is a satisfactory refreshment unto them: for therein they behold all that is good and excellent, the infinite centre of all perfections. Wicked men would have God to be in any thing but what he is: nothing that God is really and truly pleaseth them. Wherefore, they either frame false notions of him in their minds, as Psal. l. 21. or they think not of him at all, at least as they ought, unless sometimes they tremble at his anger and power. Some benefit they suppose may be had, by what he can do, but how there can be any delight in what he is, they know not: yea, all their trouble ariseth from hence, that he is what he is. It would be a relief unto them, if they could make any abatement of his power, his holiness, his righteousness, his omnipresence; but his saints, as the psalmist speaks, 'give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.'

And when we can delight in the thoughts of what God is in himself, of his infinite excellencies and perfections, it gives us a threefold evidence of our being spiritually minded. 1. In that it is such an evidence that we have a gracious

interest in those excellencies and perfections, whereon we can say, with rejoicing in ourselves, 'This God,' thus holy, thus powerful, thus just, good, and gracious, 'is our God, and he will be our guide unto death.' So the psalmist, under the consideration of his own frailty, and apprehensions of death in the midst of his years, comforts and refresheth himself with thoughts of God's eternity and immutability, with his interest in them; Psal. cii. 23—28. And God himself proposeth unto us, his infinite immutability as the ground whereon we may expect safety and deliverance; Mal. iii. 6. When we can thus think of God, and what he is with delight, it is, I say, an evidence that we have a gracious covenant interest, even in what God is in himself; which none have but those who are spiritually minded.

2. It is an evidence that the image of God is begun to be wrought in our own souls; and we approve of and rejoice in it more than in all other things whatever. Whatever notions men may have of the divine goodness, holiness, righteousness, and purity, they are all but barren, jejune, and fruitless, unless there be a similitude and conformity unto them wrought in their minds and souls. Without this they cannot rejoice in the thoughts and remembrance of the divine excellencies. Wherefore, when we can do so, when such meditations of God are sweet unto us, it is an evidence that we have some experience in ourselves of the excellency of the image of those perfections, and that we rejoice in them above all things in this world.

3. They are so also, in that they are manifest, that we do discern and judge that our eternal blessedness doth consist in the full manifestation, and our enjoyment, of God in what he is, and of all his divine excellencies. This men for the most part take for granted, but how it should be so, they know not. They understand it, in some measure, whose hearts are here deeply affected with delight in them; they are able to believe that the manifestation and enjoyment of the divine excellencies will give eternal rest, satisfaction, and complacency unto their souls. No wicked man can look upon it otherwise than a torment, to abide for ever 'with eternal holiness;' Isa. xxxiii. 14. And we ourselves can have no present prospect into the fulness of future

glory, when God shall be all in all, but through the delight and satisfaction which we have here in the contemplation of what God is in himself, as the centre of all divine perfections.

I would therefore press this unknown, this neglected duty on the minds of those of us in an especial manner, who are visibly drawing nigh unto eternity. The days are coming, wherein what God is in himself, that is as manifest and exerted in Christ, shall alone be (as we hope) the eternal blessedness and reward of our souls. Is it possible that any thing should be more necessary for us, more useful unto us, than to be exercised in such thoughts and contemplations. The benefits we may have hereby are not to be reckoned, some of them only may be named. As, 1. We shall have the best trial of ourselves, how our hearts really stand affected towards God. For if upon examination we find ourselves not really to delight and rejoice in God, for what he is in himself, and that all perfections are eternally resident in him, how dwelleth the love of God in us? But if we can truly 'rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness,' in the thoughts of what he is, our hearts are upright with him. 2. This is that which will effectually take off our thoughts and affections from things here below. One spiritual view of the divine goodness, beauty, and holiness, will have more efficacy to raise the heart unto a contempt of all earthly things, than any other evidences whatever. 3. It will increase the grace of being heavenly-minded in us, on the ground sbefore declared. 4. It is the best, I had almost said, it is the only preparation for the future full enjoyment of God. This will gradually lead us into his presence, take away all fears of death, increase our longing after eternal rest, and ever make us groan to be unclothed. Let us not then cease labouring with our hearts, until, through grace, we have a spiritually sensible delight and joy in the remembrances and thoughts of what God is in himself.

2. In thoughts of God, his saints rejoice at the remembrance of what he is, and what he will be unto them. Herein have they regard unto all the holy relations that he hath taken on himself towards them, with all the effects of his covenant in Christ Jesus. To that purpose were some of

the last words of David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. 'Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire.' In the prospect he had of all the distresses that were to befall his family, he triumphantly rejoiceth in the everlasting covenant that God had made with him. In these thoughts his saints take delight; they are sweet unto them, and full of refreshment. 'Their meditations of him are sweet, and they are glad in the Lord,' Psal. civ. 34. Thus is it with them that are truly spiritually minded: they not only think much of God, but they take delight in these thoughts; they are sweet unto them; and not only so, but they have no solid joy nor delight, but in their thoughts of God, which therefore they retreat unto continually. They do so especially on great occasions, which of themselves are apt to divert them from them. As suppose a man hath received a signal mercy, with the matter whereof he is exceedingly affected and delighted; the minds of some men are apt on such occasions to be filled with thoughts of what they have received, and their affections to be wholly taken up with it. But he who is spiritually minded, will immediately retreat unto thoughts of God, placing his delight and taking up his satisfaction in him. And so, on the other side, great distresses, prevalent sorrows, strong pains, violent distempers, are apt of themselves to take up and exercise all the thoughts of men about them. But those who are spiritually minded, will in and under them all continually betake themselves unto thoughts of God, wherein they find relief and refreshment against all that they feel or fear. In every state, their principal joy is in the remembrance of his holiness.

2. That they be accompanied with godly fear and reverence. These are required of us in all wherein we have to do with God, Heb. xii. 28, 29. And as the Scripture doth not more abound with precepts unto any duty, so the nature of God and our own, with the infinite distance between them, make it indispensably necessary even in the light of the natural conscience. Infinite greatness, infinite holiness, infinite power, all which God is, command the utmost reverential fear that our natures are capable of. The want hereof is the spring of innumerable evils; yea, indeed, of all that is so.

Hence are blasphemous abuses of the holy name of God in cursed oaths and execrations; hence it is taken in vain, in ordinary exclamations; hence is all formality in religion.

It is the spiritual mind alone that can reconcile those things which are prescribed us as our duty towards God. To delight and rejoice in him always, to triumph in the remembrance of him, to draw nigh unto him with boldness and confidence, are, on the one hand, prescribed unto us: and on the other it is so, that we fear and tremble before him, that we fear that great and dreadful name the Lord our God, that we have grace to serve him with reverence and godly fear, because he is a consuming fire. These things carnal reason can comprehend no consistency in; what it is afraid of, it cannot delight in; and what it delights in, it will not long fear. But the consideration of faith (concerning what God is in himself, and what he will be unto us) gives these different graces their distinct operations, and a blessed reconciliation in our souls. Wherefore all our thoughts of God ought to be accompanied with a holy awe and reverence, from a due sense of his greatness, holiness, and power. Two things will utterly vitiate all thoughts of God, and render them useless unto us.

1. Vain curiosity. 2. Carnal boldness. 1. It is inimaginable how the subtle disquisitions and disputes of men, about the nature, properties, and counsels of God, have been corrupted, rendered sapless and useless, by vain curiosity, and striving for an artificial accuracy in the expression of men's apprehensions. When the wits and minds of men are engaged in such thoughts, God is not in all their thoughts, even when all their thoughts are concerning him. When once men are got into their metaphysical curiosities and logical niceties, in their contemplations about God and his divine properties, they bid farewell, for the most part, unto all godly fear and reverence. 2. Others are under the power of carnal boldness, that they think of God with no other respect than if they thought of worms of the earth like themselves. There is no holy awfulness upon their minds and souls in the mention of his name. By these things may our thoughts of God be so vitiated, that the heart shall not in them be affected with a reverence of him, nor any evidence be given that we are spiritually minded.

It is this holy reverence that is the means of bringing in sanctifying virtue into our souls from God, upon our thoughts of him. None that think of God with a due reverence, but he shall be sensible of advantage by it. Hereby do we sanctify God in our access unto him; and when we do so, he will sanctify and purify our hearts by those very thoughts in which we draw nigh to him.

We may have many sudden, occasional, transient thoughts of God, that are not introduced into our minds by a preceding reverential fear. But if they leave not that fear on our hearts, in proportion unto their continuance with us, they are of no value, but will insensibly habituate us unto a common bold frame of spirit, which he despises.

So is it in the case of thoughts of a contrary nature. Thoughts of sin, of sinful objects, may arise in our minds from the remainders of corruption, or be occasioned by the temptations and suggestions of Satan. If these are immediately rejected and cast out of us, the soul is not more prejudiced by their entrance, than it is advantaged by their rejection through the power of grace. But if they make frequent returns into the minds of men, or make any abode or continuance in their soliciting of the affections, they greatly defile the mind and conscience, disposing the person unto the farther entertainment of them. So if our occasional thoughts of God do immediately leave us, and pass away without much affecting our minds, we shall have little or no benefit by them. But if, by their frequent visits, and some continuance with us, they dispose souls unto a holy reverence of God, they are a blessed means of promoting our sanctification. Without this, I say, there may be thoughts of God unto no advantage of the soul.

There is implanted on our nature such a sense of a divine power and presence, as that on all sudden occasions and surprisals, it will act itself according unto that sense and apprehension. There is 'vox naturæ clamantis ad Dominum naturæ;' 'a voice in nature itself, upon any thing that is suddenly too hard for it, which cries out immediately unto the God of nature.' So men, on such occasions, without any consideration, are surprised into a calling on the name of God, and crying unto him. And from the same natural apprehension it is, that wicked and profane persons will break

forth on all occasions into cursed swearing by his name. So men in such ways have thoughts of God without either reverence or godly fear, without giving any glory unto him, and, for the most part, unto their own disadvantage. Such are all thoughts of God that are not accompanied with holy fear and reverence.

There is scarce any duty that ought at present to be more pressed on the consciences of men, than this of keeping up a constant holy reverence of God in all wherein they have to do with him, both in private and public, in their inward thoughts and outward communication. Formality hath so prevailed on religion, and that under the most effectual means of its suppression, that very many do manifest that they have little or no reverence of God in the most solemn duties of his worship, and less, it may be, in their secret thoughts. Some ways that have been found out to keep up a pretence and appearance of it, have been and are destructive unto it.

But herein consists the very life of all religion. The fear of God is in the Old Testament the usual expression of all the due respect of our souls unto him; and that because where that is not in exercise, nothing is accepted with him. And thence the whole of our wisdom is said to consist therein; and if it be not in a prevalent exercise in all wherein we have to do with him immediately, all our duties are utterly lost as to the ends of his glory, and the spiritual advantage of our own souls.

CHAP. IX.

What of God or in God we are to think and meditate upon. His being; reasons of it; oppositions to it; the way of their conquest. Thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, peculiarly necessary. The reasons hereof. As also of his omnipotency. The use and benefit of such thoughts.

These things mentioned have been premised in general, as unto the nature, manner, and way of exercise of our thoughts on God. That which remains is to give some particular instances of what we are to think upon in an especial man-

ner; and what we will be conversant withal in our thoughts, if so be we are spiritually minded. And I shall not insist at present on the things which concern his grace and love in Christ Jesus, which belong unto another head, but on those which have an immediate respect unto the divine nature itself, and its holy essential properties.

First, Think much of the being and existence of God. Herein lies the foundation of all our relation and access unto him, Heb. xi. 6. 'He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is.' This is the first object of faith; and it is the first act of reason; and being the sole foundation of all religion, it is our duty to be exercised unto multiplied thoughts about it, renewed on all occasions. For many who are not direct atheists, yet live without any solid well-grounded assent unto the divine being; they do not so believe it as to be practically influenced with the consideration of it. It is granted, that the inbred light of nature, in the due exercise of reason, will give any rational creature satisfaction in the being of God. But there is in the most an anticipation of any thoughts of this nature by tradition and education, which hath invited men into an assent unto it, they know not how. They never called it into question, nor have as they suppose any cause so to do. Nature itself startles at the first thoughts of denying of it; but if ever such persons on any urgent occasions come to have real thoughts about it, they are at a loss, and fluctuate in their minds, as not having any certain indubitable conviction of its truth. Wherefore, as our knowledge of the Divine Being is as to the foundation of it laid in the light of nature, the operation of conscience, and the due exercise of reason about the works and effects of infinite power and wisdom; so it ought to be increased, and rendered useful by faith in divine revelations, and the experience of divine power through them. By this faith we ought to let in frequent thoughts of the divine being and existence: and that on two reasons, rendering the duty necessary in an eminent manner, in this age wherein we live.

1. The abounding of atheism, both notional and practical. The reasons of it have been given before, and the matter of fact is evident unto any ordinary observation. And *on two* accounts with respect hereunto we ought to abound

in thoughts of faith concerning the being of God. 1. An especial testimony is required in us, in opposition to this cursed effect of hell. He, therefore, who is spiritually minded, cannot but have many thoughts of the being of God, thereby giving glory to him. Isa. xliii. 9—12. 'Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange God among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.' xliv. 8. 'Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it; ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God: I know not any.' 2. We shall have occasion of them continually administered unto us. Those atheistical impieties, principles, and practices, which abound amongst us, are grievous provocations unto all pious souls. Without frequent retreat unto thoughts of the being of God, there is no relief nor refreshment to be had under them. Such was the case of Noah in the old world, and of Lot in Sodom, which rendered their graces illustrious.

2. Because of the unaccountable confusions that all things are filled withal at this day in the world. Whatever in former times hath been a temptation in human affairs unto any of the people of God, it abounds at this day. Never had men, profane and profligate, greater outward appearances to strengthen them in their atheism, nor those that are godly greater trials for their faith, with respect unto the visible state of things in the world. The psalmist of old on such an occasion was almost surprised into unbelieving complaints; Psal. lxxiii. 2—4, &c. And such surprisals may now also befal us, that we may be ready to say with him, 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.' Hence when

the prophet Habakkuk was exercised with thoughts about such a state of things as is at this day in the world, which he declares, chap. i. 6—12. he lays the foundation of his consideration in the fresh exercise of faith on the being and properties of God, ver. 12, 13. And David makes that his retreat on the like occasion, Psal. xi. 3—5.

In such a season as this is, upon both the accounts mentioned, those who are spiritually minded will much exercise their thoughts about the being and existence of God. They will say within themselves, 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God who judgeth in the earth.' Hence will follow such apprehensions of the immensity of his nature, of his eternal power and infinite wisdom, of his absolute sovereignty, as will hold their souls firm and steadfast, in the highest storms of temptation that may befall them.

Yet are there two things that the weaker sort of believers may be exercised with, in their thoughts of the divine being and existence, which may occasion them some trouble.

1. Satan knowing the weakness of our minds in the immediate contemplation of things infinite and incomprehensible, will sometimes take advantage to insinuate blasphemous imaginations in opposition unto what we would fix upon, and relieve ourselves withal. He will take that very time, trusting unto our weakness and his own methods of subtlety, to suggest his temptations unto atheism, by insnaring inquiries, when we go about to refresh our souls with thoughts of the divine being and excellencies. But is there a God indeed? How do you know that there is a God? and may it not be otherwise? will be his language unto our minds. For from his first temptation by way of an insnaring question, 'Yea, and hath God said it, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? he proceeds still much in the same methods. So he did with our Saviour himself, 'If thou be the Son of God.' Is there a God? how if there should be none? In such a case the rule is given us by the apostle; 'Above all take the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;' Eph. vi. 16. τοῦ πονηροῦ, of 'the wicked one,' that is the devil. And two ways will faith act itself on this occasion.

1. By a speedy rejection of such diabolical suggestions

with detestation. So did our Saviour in a case not unlike it; 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' Wherefore, if any such thoughts are suggested, or seem to arise in your minds, know assuredly that they are no less immediately from the devil, than if he personally stood before you, and visibly appeared unto you; if he did so, there is none of you but would arm yourselves with an utter defiance of what he should offer unto you. It is no less necessary on this occasion, when you may feel him, though you may see him not. Suffer not his fiery darts to abide one moment with you; entertain no parly or dispute about them; reject them with indignation, and strengthen your rejection of them with some pertinent testimony of Scripture, as our Saviour did. If a man have a grenado or fire-ball cast into his clothes by his enemy, he doth not consider whether it will burn or no, but immediately shakes it off from him. Deal no otherwise with these fiery darts, lest by their abode with you they inflame your imagination unto greater disturbance.

(2.) In case they utterly depart not upon this endeavour for their exclusion and casting out, return immediately without farther dispute unto your own experience. When the devil hath asked you the question, if you answer him, you will be insnared; but if thereon you ask yourselves the question, and apply yourselves unto your own experience for an answer unto it, you will frustrate all his designs.

There are arguments to be taken, as was said, from the light of nature, and reason in its proper exercise, sufficient to defeat all objections of that kind. But these are not our proper weapons in case of our own temptation, which alone is now under consideration. It requires longer and more sedate reasonings than such a state will admit of; nor is it a sanctified medium for our relief.

It is what is suited unto suggestions on the occasion of our meditations that we inquire after. In them we are not to argue on such principles, but to take the shield of faith to quench these fiery darts. And if on such occasions Satan can divert us into long disputes about the being of God, he hath his end, by carrying us off from the meditation on him which we did design, and after awhile he will prevail to make it a common road and trade, that no sooner shall we begin

to think of God, but immediately we must dispute about his being.

Therefore the way in this case for him who is really a believer, is to retreat immediately unto his own experience, which will pour shame and contempt on the suggestions of Satan. There is no believer, who hath knowledge and time to exercise the wisdom of faith in the consideration of himself and of God's dealings with him, but hath a witness in himself of his eternal power and godhead, as also of all those other perfections of his nature which he is pleased to manifest and glorify by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, on this suggestion of Satan, that there is no God, he will be able to say, that he might better tell me that I do not live nor breathe, that I am not fed by my meat, nor warmed by my clothes, that I know not myself nor any thing else; for I have spiritual sense and experience of the contrary: like him of old, who when a cunning sophister would prove unto him by syllogisms that there was no such thing as motion, he gave no answer unto his arguments, but rose up and walked. How often, will he say, have I had experience of the power and presence of God in prayer; as though I had not only heard of him by the hearing of ear, but also seen him by the seeing of the eye? How often hath he put forth his power and grace in me by his Spirit and his word with an uncontrollable evidence of his being, goodness, love, and grace? How often hath he refreshed my conscience with the sense of the pardon of sin, speaking that peace unto my soul, which all the world could not communicate unto me? In how many afflictions, dangers, troubles, hath he been a present help and relief? what sensible emanations of life and power from him have I obtained in meditation on his grace and glory? As he who had been blind, answered the Pharisees unto their insnaring and captious questions; be it what it will, 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' Whatever, saith such a soul, be in this temptation of Satan, one thing I know full well, that 'whereas I was dead, I am alive, whereas I was blind, now I see, and that by the effect of divine power.'

This shield of faith, managed in the hand of experience, will quench the fiery darts of Satan; and he will fall under

a double defeat. 1. His temptations will be repelled by the proper way of resistance, whereon he will not only desist in his attempt, but even fly from you. 'Resist the devil,' saith the apostle, 'and he will fly from you.' He will not only depart and cease to trouble you, but will depart as one defeated and confounded. And it is for want of this resistance lively made use of, that many hang so long in the briars of this temptation. 2. Recalling the experiences we have had of God, will lead us unto the exercise of all kind of graces, which is the greatest disappointment of our adversary.

2. In thoughts of the divine being and existence, we are apt to be at a loss, to be as it were overwhelmed in our minds, because the object is too great and glorious for us to contemplate on. Eternity and immensity, every thing under the notion of infinite, take off the mind from its distinct actings, and reduce it as it were unto nothing. Hereon in some, not able to abide in the strict reasons of things, vain and foolish imaginations are apt to arise, and inquiries how can these things be, which we cannot comprehend? Others are utterly at a loss, and turn away their thoughts from them, as they would do their eyes from the bright beams of the sun. Two things are advisable in this case.

1. That we betake ourselves unto a holy admiration of what we cannot comprehend. In these things we cannot see God and live; nay, in life eternal itself, they are not absolutely to be comprehended, only what is infinite can fully comprehend what is so. Here they are the objects of faith and worship: in them we may find rest and satisfaction, when inquiries and reasonings will disquiet us, and it may be overwhelm us. Infinite glory forbids us any near approach but only by faith. The soul thereby bowing down itself unto God's adorable greatness, and incomprehensible perfections, finding ourselves to be nothing and God to be all, will give us rest and peace in these things; Rom. xi. 33—36. We have but unsteady thoughts of the greatness of the world, and all the nations and inhabitants of it; yet are both it and these but as 'the dust of the balance, and the drop of the bucket, as vanity, as nothing,' compared with God: what then can our thoughts concerning him issue in, but holy admiration?

2. In case we are brought unto a loss and disorder in our minds, on the contemplation of any one infinite property of God, it is good to divert our thoughts unto the effects of it, such as whereof we have, or may have, experience; for what is too great or high for us in itself, is made suitable to our understandings in its effects. So the 'invisible things of God, are known in and by the things that are seen.' And there is indeed no property of the divine nature, but we may have an experience of it as unto some of its effects in and upon ourselves. These we may consider, and in the streams taste of the fountain which we cannot approach. By them we may be led unto a holy admiration of what is in itself infinite, immense, incomprehensible. I cannot comprehend the immensity of God's nature; it may be I cannot understand the nature of immensity; yet if I find by experience, and do strongly believe, that he is always present wherever I am, I have the faith of it, and satisfaction in it.

Secondly, With thoughts of the Divin eBeing, those of his omnipresence and omniscience ought continually to accompany us. We cannot take one step in a walk before him, unless we remember that always and in all places he is present with us; that the frame of our hearts and our inward thoughts are continually in his view no less than our outward actions. And as we ought to be perpetually under an awe of, and in the fear of, God in these apprehensions, so there are some seasons wherein our minds ought to be in the actual conception and thoughts of them, without which we shall not be preserved in our duty.

1. The first season of this nature, is when times, places, with other occasions of temptation, and consequently of sinning, do come and meet. With some, company doth constitute such a season; and with some, secrecy with opportunity do the same. There are those who are ready with a careless boldness to put themselves on such societies as they do know have been temptations unto them and occasions of sin; every such entrance into any society or company, unto them who know how it hath formerly succeeded, is their actual sin, and it is just with God to leave them to all the evil consequents that do ensue. Others also do either choose, or are frequently cast on, such societies; and no sooner are they engaged in them, but they forget all re-

gard unto God, and give themselves up not only unto vanity, but unto various sorts of excess. David knew the evil and danger of such occasions; and gives us an account of his behaviour in them, Psal. xxxix. 1—3. 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence; I held my peace, even from good, and my sorrow was stirred: my heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.' As for their evil words and ways he would have no communication with them. And as unto good discourse, he judged it unseasonable to cast 'pearl before swine.' He was therefore silent as unto that also, though it was a grief and trouble to him. But this occasioned in him afterward those excellent meditations which he expresseth in the following verses. In the entrance of these occasions, if men would remember the presence of God with them in these places, with the holy severity of the eye that is upon them, it would put an awe upon their spirits, and imbitter those jollities, whose relish is given them by temptation and sin. He doth neither walk humbly nor circumspectly, who being unnecessarily cast on the society of men, wicked or profane (on such occasions wherein the ordinary sort of men give more than ordinary liberty unto corrupt communication or excess in any kind), doth not in his entrance of them call to mind the presence and all-seeing eye of God, and at his departure from them, consider whether his deportment hath been such as became that presence, and his being under that eye. But, alas! pretences of business and necessary occasions, engagement of trade, carnal relations, and the common course of communication in the world, with a supposition that all sorts of society are allowed for diversion, have cast out the remembrance of God from the minds of most, even then when men cannot be preserved from sin without it.

This hath sullied the beauty of gospel conversation amongst the most, and left in very few any prevalent evidence of being spiritually minded.

Wherefore, as unto them who either by their voluntary choice or necessity of their occasions, do enter and engage promiscuously into all societies and companies, let them

know assuredly, that if they awe not their hearts and spirits continually with the thoughts and apprehensions of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, that he is always with them, and his eye always upon them, they will not be preserved from snares and sinful miscarriages.

Yea, such thoughts are needful unto the best of us all, and in the best of our societies, that we behave not ourselves indecently in them at any time.

Again, unto some, privacy, secrecy, and opportunity, are occasions of temptation and sin. They are so unto persons under convictions not wholly turned to God. Many a good beginning hath been utterly ruined by this occasion and temptation. Privacy and opportunity have overthrown many such persons in the best of their resolutions: and they are so unto all persons not yet flagitiously wicked. Cursed fruits proceed every day from these occasions. We need no other demonstration of their power and efficacy in tempting unto sin, but the visible effects of them: and what they are unto any, they may be unto all, if not diligently watched against. So the apostle reflects on the 'shameful things that are done in the dark,' in a concurrence of secrecy and opportunity. This, therefore, gives a just season unto thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and they will not be wanting in some measure in them that are spiritually minded.

God is in this place, the darkness is no darkness unto him, light and darkness are with him both alike; are sufficient considerations to lay in the balance against any temptation springing out of secrecy and opportunity. One thought of the actual presence of the holy God, and the open view of his all-seeing eye, will do more to cool those affections which lust may put into a tumult on such occasions, than any other consideration whatever. A speedy retreat hereunto upon the first perplexing thought wherewith temptation assaults the soul, will be its strong tower, where it shall be safe.

2. A second season calling for the exercise of our minds in thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, is made up of our solitudes and retirements. These give us the most genuine trials whether we are spiritually minded or no. What we are in them, that we are and no more,

But yet in some of them, as in walking and journeying, or the like, vain thoughts and foolish imaginations are exceeding apt to solicit our minds. Whatever is stored up in the affections or memory, will at such a time offer itself for our present entertainment: and where men have accustomed themselves unto any sort of things, they will press on them for the possession of their thoughts, as it were, whether they will or no. The psalmist gives us the way to prevent this evil; Psal. xvi. 7, 8. 'I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night season. I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand.' His reins, that is, his affections, and secret thoughts, gave him counsel, and instructed him in all such seasons: but whence had they that wisdom and faithfulness? in themselves they are the seat of all lusts and corruptions, nor could do any thing but seduce him into an evil frame. It was from hence alone 'that he set the Lord always before him.' Continual apprehensions of the presence of God with him, kept his mind, his heart and affections, in that awe and reverence of him, as that they always instructed him unto his duty. But as I remember, I spake somewhat as unto the due management of our thoughts in this season before.

3. Times of great difficulties, dangers, and perplexities of mind thereon, are a season calling for the same duty. Suppose a man is left alone in his trials for the profession of the gospel, as it was with Paul, when 'all men forsook him, and no man stood by him.' Suppose him to be brought before princes, rulers, or judges that are filled with rage and armed with power against him, all things being disposed to affect him with dread and terror. It is the duty of such a one to call off his thoughts from all things visibly present, and to fix them on the omnipresence and omniscience of God. He sits amongst those judges though they acknowledge him not; he rules over them at his pleasure; he knows the cause of the oppressed, and justifies them whenever the world condemns; and can deliver them when he pleaseth. With the thoughts hereof did those holy souls support themselves when they stood before the fiery countenance of the bloody tyrant on the one hand, and the burning fiery furnace on the other, Dan. iii. 17, 18. 'Our God whom we serve

is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' Thoughts of the presence and power of God, gave them not only comfort and supportment under their distress, when they were alone and helpless, but courage and resolution to defy the tyrant to his face. And when the apostle was brought before Nero, that monster of cruelty and villany, and all men forsook him, he affirms, 'That the Lord stood by him and strengthened him;' 2 Tim. iv. 17. He refreshed himself with thoughts of his presence, and had the blessed fruit of it.

Wherefore, on such occasions, when the hearts of men are ready to quake, when they see all things about them filled with dread and terror, and all help far away, it is, I say, their duty and wisdom to abstract and take off their thoughts from all outward and present appearances, and to fix them on the presence of God. This will greatly change the scene of things in their minds; and they will find that strength, and power, and wisdom are on their side alone; all that appears against them, being but vanity, folly, and weakness.

So when the servant of Elisha saw the place where they were compassed with a host, both horses and chariots that came to take them, he cried out for fear, 'Alas! my master, how shall we do?' But upon the prayer of the prophet, the Lord opening the eyes of the young man, to see the heavenly guard that he had sent unto him, the mountain being full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, his fear and trouble departed; 2 Kings vi. 15—17. And when in the like extremity God opens the eye of faith to behold his glorious presence, we shall no more be afraid of the dread of men. Herein did the holy martyrs triumph of old, and even despised their bloody persecutors. Our Saviour himself made it the ground of his supportment on the like occasion; John xvi. 32. 'Behold' (saith he to his disciples, his only friends), 'the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.' Can we but possess our souls with the apprehension, that when we are left alone in our trials and dan-

gers, from any countenance of friends, or help of men, yet that indeed we are not alone, because the Father is with us, it will support us under our despondencies, and enable us unto our duties.

4. Especial providential warnings call for thoughts of God's omnipresence and omniscience. So Jacob, in his nightly vision, instantly made this conclusion; 'God is in this place, and I knew it not.' We have frequently such warnings given unto us. Sometimes we have so in the things which are esteemed accidental, whence it may be we are strangely delivered. Sometimes we have so in the things which we see to befall others, by thunder, lightning, storms at sea or land. For all the works of God, especially those that are rare and strange, have a voice whereby he speaks unto us. The first thing suggested unto a spiritual mind in such seasons, will be, God is in this place, he is present that liveth and seeth, as Hagar confessed on the like occasion; Gen. xvi. 13, 14.

Thirdly, Have frequent thoughts of God's omnipotency, or his almighty power. This mostm en, it may be, suppose they need not much exhortation unto; for none ever doubted of it; who doth not grant it on all occasions? Men grant it indeed in general; for eternal power is inseparable from the first notion of the Divine Being. So are they conjoined by the apostle, 'his eternal power and Godhead,' Rom. i. 20. Yet few believe it for themselves, and as they ought. Indeed, to believe the almighty power of God, with reference unto ourselves and all our concernments, temporal and eternal, is one of the highest and most noble acts of faith, which includes all others in it. For this is that which God at first proposed alone as the proper object of our faith, in our entrance into covenant with him, Gen. xvii. 1. 'I am God Almighty:' that which Job arrived unto after his long exercise and trial: 'I know,' saith he, 'thou canst do every thing, and no thought of thine can be hindered;' chap. xlii. 2. 'God hath spoken once' saith the psalmist, 'twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God;' Psal. lxii. 11. It was that which God saw it necessary frequently to instruct him in. For we are ready to be affected with the appearances of present power in creatures, and to suppose that all things will go according unto their wills, because of their

power. But it is quite otherwise; all creatures are poor feeble ciphers that can do nothing: power belongs unto God; it is a flower of his crown imperial, which he will suffer none to usurp; if the proudest of them go beyond the bounds and limits of his present permission, he will send worms to eat them up, as he did to Herod.

It is utterly impossible we should walk before God, unto his glory, or with any real peace, comfort, or satisfaction in our own souls, unless our minds are continually exercised with thoughts of his almighty power. Every thing that befalls us, every thing that we hear of, which hath the least of danger in it, will discompose our minds, and either make us tremble like the leaves of the forest that are shaken with the wind, or betake ourselves to foolish or sinful relief, unless we are firmly established in the faith hereof. Consider the promises of God unto the church which are upon record, and as yet unaccomplished; consider the present state of the church in the world, with all that belongs unto it; in all the fears and dangers they are exposed unto, in all the evils they are exercised withal, and we shall quickly find that unless this sheet-anchor be well fixed, we shall be tossed up and down at all uncertainties, and exposed to most violent temptations; Rev. xix. 6. Unto this end are we called hereunto by God himself, in his answer unto the despondent complaints of the church in its greatest dangers and calamities; Isa. xl. 28—31. 'Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.'

Take one instance, which is the continual concernment of us all. We are obnoxious unto death every moment. It is never the farther from any of us because we think not of it as we ought. This will lay our bodies in the dust, from whence they will have no more disposition nor power in themselves to rise again, than any other part of the mould of

the earth. Their recovery must be an act of external almighty power, when God shall have a desire to the work of his hands; when he shall call, and we shall answer him out of the dust. And it will transmit the soul into an invisible world, putting a final end unto all relations, enjoyments, and circumstances here below. I speak not of them who are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, who live and die like beasts, or under the power of horrible presumption, without any due thoughts of their future and eternal state. But, as unto others, what comfort or satisfaction can any man have in his life, whereon his all depends, and which is passing from him every moment, unless he hath continual thoughts of the mighty power of God, whereby he is able to receive his departing soul, and to raise his body out of the dust?

Not to insist on more particulars; thus is it with them who are spiritually minded; thus must it be with us all, if we pretend a title unto that privilege. They are filled with thoughts of God, in opposition unto that character of wicked men, that God is not in all their thoughts. And it is greatly to be feared, that many of us, when we come to be weighed in this balance, will be found too light. Men may be in the performance of outward duties; they may hear the word with delight, and do many things gladly; they may escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust, and not run out into the same compass of excess and riot with other men; yet may they be strangers unto inward thoughts of God with delight and complacency. I cannot understand how it can be otherwise with them whose minds are over and over filled with earthly things, however they may satisfy themselves with pretences of their callings and lawful enjoyments, or not any way inordinately set on the pleasures or profits of the world.

To walk with God, to live unto him, is not merely to be found in an abstinence from outward sins, and in the performance of outward duties, though with diligence in the multiplication of them. All this may be done upon such principles, for such ends, with such a frame of heart, as to find no acceptance with God. It is our hearts that he requireth, and we can no way give them unto him but by our affections and holy thoughts of him with delight. This it is

to be spiritually minded, this it is to walk with God. Let no man deceive himself: unless he thus abound in holy thoughts of God, unless our meditation of him be sweet unto us, all that we else pretend unto will fail us in the day of our trial.

This is the first thing wherein we may evidence ourselves unto ourselves, to be under the conduct of the minding of the Spirit, or to be spiritually minded. And I have insisted the longer on it, because it contains the first sensible egress of the Spirit of living waters in us, the first acting of spiritual life unto our own experience. I should now proceed unto the consideration of our affections, of whose frame and state these thoughts are the only genuine exposition. But whereas there are, or may be, some who are sensible of their own weakness and deficiency in the discharge of that part of this duty in being spiritually minded, which we have passed through, and may fall under discouragements thereon, we must follow him, as we are able, who will not 'quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed,' by offering something unto the relief of them that are sincere under the sense of their own weakness.

CHAP. X.

Sundry things tendered unto such as complain that they know not how, that they are not able to abide in holy thoughts of God, and spiritual or heavenly things; for their relief, instruction, and direction. Rules concerning stated spiritual meditation.

Some will say, yea, on many occasions do say, that there is not any thing in all their duty towards God, wherein they are more at a loss than they are in this one, of fixing or exercising their thoughts or meditations on things heavenly or spiritual. They acknowledge it a duty; they see an excellency in it, with inexpressible usefulness. But although they often try and attempt it, they cannot attain unto any thing but what makes them ashamed both of it and themselves. Their minds they find are unsteady, apt to rove and wander, or give entertainment unto other things, and not to abide on the object which they design their meditation to-

wards. Their abilities are small, their invention barren, their memories frail, and their judgments, to dispose of things into right order, weak and unable. They know not what to think on for the most part, and when they fix on any thing, they are immediately at a loss as unto any progress, and so give over. Hence other thoughts, or thoughts of other things, take advantage to impose themselves on them, and what began in spiritual meditation, ends in carnal vanity. On these considerations, ofttimes they are discouraged to enter on the duty, ofttimes give it over so soon as it is begun, and are glad if they come off without being losers by their endeavours, which often befalls them. With respect unto other duties, it is not so with them. Unto such as are really concerned in these things, unto whom their want and defect is a burden, who mourn under it, and desire to be freed from it, or refreshed in their conflict with it, I shall offer the things that ensue.

First, That sense of the vanity of our minds which this consideration duly attended unto will give us, ought greatly to humble and abase our souls. Whence is it thus with us, that we cannot abide in thoughts and meditations of things spiritual and heavenly? Is it because they are such things as we have no great concernment in? It may be they are things worthless and unprofitable, so that it is to no purpose to spend our thoughts about them. The truth is, they alone are worthy, useful, and desirable; all other things, in comparison of them, are but loss and dung. Or is it because the faculties and powers of our souls were not originally suited unto the contemplation of them and delight in them? This also is otherwise; they were all given unto us, all created of God for this end, all fitted with inclinations and power to abide with God in all things, without aversation or weariness. Nothing was so natural, easy, and pleasant unto them, as steadiness in the contemplation of God and his works. The cause, therefore, of all this evil lies at our own doors. All this, therefore, and all other evils, came upon us by the entrance of sin. And therefore Solomon, in his inquiry after all the causes and effects of vanity, brings it under this head; 'Lo this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions;' Eccles. vii. 29. For hereby our minds that were created in

a state of blessed adherence unto God, were wholly turned off from him, and not only so, but filled with enmity against him. In this state, that vanity which is prevalent in them is both their sin and their punishment. Their sin is a perpetual inclination unto things vain, foolish, sensual, and wicked. So the apostle describes it at large, Ephes. iv. 17—19. Tit. iii. 3. And their punishment in that, being turned off from the chiefest good, wherein alone rest is to be found, they are filled with darkness, confusion, and disquietment, being like 'a troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.'

By grace our minds are renewed; that is, changed and delivered from this frame; but they are so partially only. The principle of vanity is no longer predominant in us, to alienate us from the life of God, or to keep us in enmity against him. Those who are so renewed, do not walk in the vanity of their minds as others do, Ephes. iv. 17. They go up and down in all their ways and occasions with a stream of vain thoughts in their minds. But the remainders of it are effectually operative in us, in all the actings of our minds towards God, affecting them with uncertainty and instability. As he who hath received a great wound in any principal part of his body, though it may be so cured, as that death shall not immediately ensue thereon; yet it may make him go weak and lame all his days, and hinder him in the exercise of all the powers of life. The vanity of our minds is so cured, as to deliver us from spiritual death; but yet such a wound, such a weakness doth remain, as both weakens and hinders us in all the operations of spiritual life. Hence those who have made any progress in grace, are sensible of their vanity, as the greatest burden of their souls, and do groan after such a complete renovation of their minds, as whereby they may be perfectly freed from it. This is that which they principally regard in that complaining desire, Rom. vii. 24. 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Yea, they groan under a sense of it every day; nor is any thing such a trouble unto them, observing how it defeats them in their designs to contemplate on heavenly things; how it frustrates their best resolutions to abide in the spiritual actings *of faith* and love; how they are imposed on by it with the

thoughts of things which either in themselves, or in their consequences, they most abhor; nothing are they so afraid of, nothing is so grievous and burdensome unto them, nothing do they more groan for deliverance from. When there is war in any place, it behoveth them that are concerned, to have an eye and regard unto all their enemies, and their attempts against them. But if they are vigilant and diligent in their opposition unto those that are without, that visibly contend with them, and in the mean time neglect such as traiterously act within among themselves, betraying their counsels, and weakening their strength, they will be undoubtedly ruined. Wise men do first take care of what is within, as knowing if they are there betrayed, all they do against their open enemies is to no purpose. In the warfare wherein we are engaged, we have enemies of all sorts that openly and visibly, in various temptations, fight against our souls. These it is our duty to watch against, to conflict with, and to seek a conquest over. But it is this internal vanity of mind, that endeavours in all things to betray us, to weaken us in all our graces, or to hinder their due operations; and to open the doors of our hearts unto our cursed enemies. If our principal endeavour be not to discover, suppress, and destroy this traitor, we shall not succeed in our spiritual warfare.

This therefore being the original cause of all that disability of mind as unto steadiness in holy thoughts and meditations whereof you do complain, when you are affected therewith, turn unto the consideration of that from whence it doth proceed. Labour to be humbled greatly, and to walk humbly, under a sense of the remainders of this vanity of mind. So some wholesome fruits may be taken from this bitter root; and meat may come out of this eater. If when you cannot abide in holy thoughts of God, and your relation unto him, you reflect on this cause of it to your farther humiliation and self-abasement, your good design and purposes are not lost. Let such a one say; I began to think of God, of his love and grace in Christ Jesus, of my duty towards him; and where now in a few minutes do I find myself? I am got into the ends of the earth, into things useless and earthly; or am at such a loss as that I have no mind to proceed in the work wherein I was en-

gaged. O wretched man that I am, what a cursed enemy have I within me! I am ashamed of myself, weary of myself, loath myself; 'who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Such thoughts may be as useful unto him as those which he first designed.

True it is we can never be freed absolutely from all the effects of this vanity and instability of mind in this world. Unchangeable cleaving unto God, always, in all the powers and affections of our minds, is reserved for heaven. But yet great degrees may be attained in the conquest and expulsion of it, such as I fear few have experience of; yet ought all to labour after. If we apply ourselves as we ought to the increase of spiritual light and grace; if we labour diligently to abide and abound in thoughts of spiritual things, and that in love to them, and delight in them; if we watch against the entertainment and approbation of such thoughts and things in our minds, as whereby this vain frame is pleased and confirmed; there is, though not an absolute perfection, yet a blessed degree of heavenly mindedness to be attained, and therein the nearest approach unto glory, that in this world we are capable of. If a man cannot attain an athletic constitution of health, or a strength like that of Samson; yet, if he be wise, he will not omit the use of such means as may make him to be useful in the ordinary duties of life. And although we cannot attain perfection in this matter, which yet is our duty to be continually pressing after; yet, if we are wise, we will be endeavouring such a cure of this spiritual distemper, as we may be able to discharge all the duties of the life of God. But if men, in all other things, feed the vanity of their own minds, if they permit them to rove continually after things foolish, sensual, and earthly; if they wilfully supply them with objects unto that end, and labour not by all means for the mortification of this evil frame; in vain shall they desire or expect to bring them at any time, on any occasion, to be steady in the thoughts of heavenly things. If it be thus with any, as it is to be feared it is with many, it is their duty to mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the first place, 'make the tree good, and the fruit will be good,' and not before. When the power of sanctifying *grace* hath made the mind habitually spiritual and heavenly,

thoughts of such things will be natural unto it, and accompanied with delight. But they will not be so until the God of peace have sanctified us in our whole spirits, souls, and bodies, whereby we may be preserved blameless unto the coming of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Be always sensible of your own insufficiency to raise in your minds or to manage spiritual thoughts, or thoughts of things spiritual and heavenly in a due manner. But in this case men are apt to suppose, that as they may, so they can, think of what they please. Thoughts are their own, and therefore be they of what sort they will, they need no assistance for them. They cannot think as they ought, they can do nothing at all. And nothing will convince them of their folly, until they are burdened with an experience of the contrary, as unto spiritual things. But the advice given is expressly laid down by the apostle, in the instance of himself, 2 Cor. iii. 5. 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.' He speaks principally of ministers of the gospel, and that of such as were most eminently furnished with spiritual gifts and graces, as he declares, ver. 6. And if it be so with them, and that with respect unto the work and duties of their calling; how much more is it so with others, who have not their graces nor their offices? Wherefore if men, without regard unto the present actual grace of God, and the supplies of his Spirit, do suppose that they can of themselves, exercise their minds in spiritual thoughts, and so only fret at themselves when they fall into disappointment, not knowing what is the matter with them, they will live in a lifeless barren frame all their days.

By the strength of their natural abilities, men may frame thoughts of God, and heavenly things in their minds, according unto the knowledge they have of them. They may methodize them by rules of art, and express them elegantly unto others. But even while they do so, they may be far enough from being spiritually minded. For there may be in their thoughts no actings of faith, love, or holy delight in God, or any grace at all. But such alone are things which we inquire after, they are such only as wherein the graces of the Spirit are in their proper exercise. With respect unto them we have no sufficiency in ourselves, all our

sufficiency must be of God. There is no truth among persons of light and knowledge more generally granted in the notion of it than this, that of ourselves we can do nothing; and none more neglected in daily practice. Men profess they can do nothing of themselves, and yet go about their duties as if they could do all things.

Thirdly, Remember that I have not at present treated of solemn stated meditation; concerning which, other rules and instructions ought to be given. By solemn or stated meditation, I intend the thoughts of some subject spiritual and divine, with the fixing, forcing, and ordering our thoughts about it, with a design to affect our own hearts and souls with the matter of it, or the things contained in it. By this design it is distinguished from the study of the word, wherein our principal aim is to learn the truth, or to declare it unto others. And so also from prayer, whereof God himself is the immediate object. But in meditation it is the affecting of our own hearts and minds with love, delight, and humiliation. At present I have only shewed what it is to be spiritually minded, and that in this instance of our thoughts as they proceed from the habitual frame of our hearts and affections; or of what sort the constant course of our thoughts ought to be, with respect unto all the occasions of the life of God. This persons may be in a readiness for, who are yet unskilful in, and unable for, stated meditation. For there is required thereunto such an exercise of our natural faculties and abilities, as some through their weakness and ignorance are incapable of. But as unto what we have hitherto insisted on, it is not unattainable by any in whom is the spirit of faith and love; for it is but the frequent actings of them that I intend. Wherefore, do your hearts and affections lead you unto many thoughts of God and spiritual things? Do they spring up in you, as water in a well of living waters? Are you ready on all occasions to entertain such thoughts, and to be conversant with them, as opportunity doth offer itself? Do you labour to have in a readiness what is useful for you with respect unto temptations and duties? Is God in Christ, and the things of the gospel, the ordinary retreat of your souls? Though you should not be able to carry on an orderly stated meditation in your minds, yet you may be spiritually minded.

A man may not have a capacity and ability to carry on a great trade of merchandise in the world. The knowledge of all sorts of commodities, and seasons, of the world and nations of it, with those contrivances and accounts which belong unto such trade, may be above his comprehension, and he may quickly ruin himself in undertaking such an employment. Yet may the abilities of this man serve him well enough to carry on a retail trade in a private shop, wherein perhaps he may thrive as well, and get as good an estate, as any of those whose greater capacities lead them forth unto more large and hazardous employments. So it may be with some in this case: the natural faculties of their minds are not sufficient to enable them unto stated meditation; they cannot cast things into that method and order which is required thereunto; nor frame the conceptions of their minds into words significant and expressive; yet, as unto frequency of thoughts of God, and a disposition of mind thereunto, they may thrive and be skilful beyond most others of greater natural abilities. Howbeit, because even stated meditation is a necessary duty, yea, the principal way whereby our spiritual thoughts do profitably act themselves, I shall have regard thereunto in the following direction. Wherefore,

Fourthly, Whatever principle of grace we have in our minds, we cannot attain unto a ready exercise of it in a way of spiritual meditation or otherwise, without great diligence, nor without great difficulty.

It was shewed at the entrance of this discourse, that there is a difference in this grace, between the essence, substance, or reality of it, which we would not exclude men from, under many failings or infirmities; and the useful degrees of it, wherein it hath its principal exercise. As there is a difference in life natural, and its actings, in a weak diseased sickly body, and in that which is of a good constitution and in a vigorous health. Supposing the first, the reality of this grace, be wrought in us, or implanted in our minds by the Holy Ghost, as a principal part of that new nature which is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; yet, unto the growth and improvement of it, as of all other graces, our own diligent care, watchfulness, and spiritual striving in all holy duties, are required. Unless the most fruitful ground be manured, it

it will not bring forth a useful crop. Let not any think that this frame of a spiritual mind, wherein there is a disposition unto, and a readiness for, all holy thoughts of God, of Christ, of spiritual and heavenly things, at all times and on all occasions, will befall him and continue with him he knows not how. As good it is for a poor man to expect to be rich in this world without industry, or a weak man to be strong and healthy without food and exercise; as to be spiritually minded without an earnest endeavour after it. It may be inquired, what is requisite thereunto? and we may name some of those things without which such a holy frame will not be attained. As

1. A continual watch is to be kept in and on the soul, against the incursions of vain thoughts and imaginations, especially in such seasons wherein they are apt to obtain advantage. If they are suffered to make an inroad into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, if they are wont to lodge within, in vain shall we hope or desire to be spiritually minded. Herein consists a principal part of that duty which our Saviour so frequently, so emphatically chargeth on us all; namely, to watch, Mark iii. 37. Unless we keep a strict watch herein, we shall be betrayed into the hands of our spiritual enemies; for all such thoughts are but making provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires in the lusts thereof, however they may be disappointed as unto actual sin. This is the substance of the advice given us in charge, Prov. iv. 23. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.'

2. Careful avoidance of all societies and businesses of this life, which are apt, under various pretences, to draw and seduce the mind unto an earthly or sensual frame. If men will venture on those things which they have found by experience, or may find by their observation, that they seduce and draw off their minds from a heavenly frame unto that which is contrary thereunto, and will not watch unto their avoidance, they will be filled with the fruit of their own ways. Indeed, the common converses of professors among themselves and others, walking, talking, and behaving themselves like other men, being as full of the world as the world is of itself, hath lost the grace of being spiritually minded within, and stained the glory of profes-

sion without. The rule observed by David will manifest how careful we ought to be herein, Psal. xxxix. 1—3. 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue.' Which place was spoken unto before.

3. A holy constraint put on the mind to abide in the duty of spiritual thoughts and meditations, pressing it continually with the consideration of their necessity and usefulness. The mind will be apt of itself to start aside from duties purely spiritual, through the mixture of the flesh abiding in it. The more inward and purely spiritual any duty is, which hath no outward advantages; the more prone will the mind be to decline from it. It will be so, more from private prayer than public, more from meditation than prayer. And other things will be apt to draw it aside by objects without, and various stirrings of the affections within. A holy constraint is to be put upon it, with a sudden rejection of what rises up to its diversion or disturbance. Wherefore, we are to call in all constraining motives, such as the consideration of the love of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 14. to keep the mind steady unto its duty.

4. Diligent use of means to furnish the soul with that light and knowledge of heavenly things, which may administer continual matter of holy thoughts and meditations from within ourselves. This hath been spoken unto at large before. And the want hereof is that which keeps many from the least proficiency in these duties. As a man may have some skill or ability for a trade, yet if he have no materials to work upon, he must sit still and let his trade alone. And so must men do as unto the work of holy meditation: whatever be the ability of the natural faculties, their inventions, or memories, if they are not furnished with knowledge of things spiritual and heavenly, which are the subject matter of such meditations, they must let their work alone. Hence the apostle prays for the Colossians, that the word of God might 'dwell in them richly in all wisdom;' chap. v. 16. that is, that they might abound in the

knowledge of the mind of Christ, without which we shall be unfit for this duty.

5. Unweariedness in our conflict with Satan, who by various artifices, and the injection of fiery darts, labours continually to divert us from these duties. He is seldom or never wanting unto this occasion. He who is furnished in any measure with spiritual wisdom and understanding, may find him more sensibly at work in his craft and opposition with respect unto this duty, than any other way. When we stand thus before the Lord, he is always at our right hand to resist us; and ofttimes his strength is great. Hence, as was observed, ofttimes men design really to exercise themselves in holy thoughts, but end in vain imaginations, and rather take up with trifles than continue in this duty. Steadiness in the resistance of him on these occasions, is one great part of our spiritual warfare. And we may know that he is at work by his engines and methods. For they consist in his suggestions of vain, foolish, or corrupt imaginations. When they begin to rise in our minds, at such times as we would engage them in spiritual meditation, we may know assuredly from whence they are.

6. Continual watchful care, that no root of bitterness spring up and defile us; that no lust or corruption be predominant in us. When it is so, if persons in compliance with their convictions do endeavour sometimes to be exercised in these duties, they shall labour in the very fire, where all their endeavours will be immediately consumed.

7. Mortifications unto the world in our affections and desires, with moderation in our endeavours after the needful things of it, are also necessary hereunto; yea, to that degree, that without them no man can in any sense be said to be spiritually minded. For otherwise our affections cannot be so preserved under the power of grace, as that spiritual things may be always savoury unto us.

Some it may be will say, that if all these things are required thereunto, it will take up a man's whole life and time to be spiritually minded. They hope they may attain it at an easier rate, and not forego all other advantages and sweetnesses of life, which a strict observation of these things would cast them upon.

I answer; that however it may prove a hard saying

unto some, yet I must say it, and my heart would reproach me if I should not say, that if the principal part of our time be not spent about these things, whatever we suppose, we have indeed neither life nor peace. The first-fruits of all were to be offered unto God, and in sacrifices he required the blood, and the fat of the inwards. If the best be not his, he will have nothing. It is so as to our time. Tell me, I pray you, how you can spend your time and your lives better, or to better purpose; and I shall say, Go on and prosper. I am sure some spend so much of their time so much worse, as it is a shame to see it. Do you think you came into this world, to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of the will of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably, it may be corruptly, in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough to live unto God, in the very essentials of that life which consists in these things? Alas! you came into the world under this law; 'it is appointed to all men once to die, and after that is the judgment;' and the end why your life is here granted unto you, is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will fall under the sentence of it unto eternity.

But men are apt to mistake in this matter. They may think that these things tend to take them off from their lawful employments and recreations, which they are generally afraid of, and unwilling to purchase any frame of mind at so dear a rate. They may suppose that to have men spiritually minded, we would make them mopes, and to disregard all the lawful occasions of life. But let not any be mistaken; I am not upon a design that will be easily, or, it may be, honestly, defeated. Men are able to defend themselves in their callings and enjoyments, and to satisfy their consciences against any persuasions to the contrary. Yet there is a season wherein we are obliged to part with all we have, and to give up ourselves wholly to follow Christ in all things; Matt. xix. 21. And if we neglect or refuse it in that season, it is an evidence that we are hypocrites. And there was a time when superstition had so much power on the minds of

men, that multitudes were persuaded to forsake, to give up all their interest in relations, callings, goods, possessions, and betake themselves unto tedious pilgrimages, yea, hard services in war, to comply with that superstition; and it is not the glory of our profession, that we have so few instances of men parting with all, and giving up themselves unto heavenly retirement. But I am at present on no such design; I aim not to take men out of their lawful earthly occasions, but to bring spiritual affections and thoughts into the management of them all. The things mentioned will deprive you of no time you can lay a claim unto; but sanctify it all.

I confess he must be a great proficient in spirituality, who dares venture on an absolute retirement; and he must be well satisfied that he is not called unto a usefulness among men inconsistent therewith: unto them it may prove a disadvantage. Yet this also is attainable if other circumstances do concur. Men under the due exercise of grace, and the improvement of it, may attain unto that fixedness in heavenly mindedness, that unconcernment in all things here below, as to give themselves up entirely and continually unto heavenly meditation, unto a blessed advancement of all grace, and a near approach unto glory. And I would hope it was so with many of them in ancient times, who renounced the world with all circumstances of relations, state, inheritances, and betook themselves unto retirement in wildernesses, to abide always in divine contemplation. But afterward, when multitudes whose minds were not so prepared by a real growth in all grace and mortification unto the world, as they were, betook themselves under the same pretences unto a monastical retirement, the devil, the world, sensual lusts, superstition, and all manner of evils pursued them, found them out, possessed them, unto the unspeakable damage and scandal of religion.

This, therefore, is not that which I invite the common sort of believers unto. Let them that are able and free receive it. The generality of Christians have lawful callings, employments, and businesses, which ordinarily they ought to abide in. That they also may live unto God in their occasions, they may do well to consider two things.

1. Industry in men's callings is a thing in itself very *commendable*. If in nothing else, it hath an advantage

herein, that it is a means to preserve men from those excesses in lust and riot, which otherwise they are apt to run into. And if you consider the two sorts of men whereinto the generality of mankind are distributed, namely, of them who are industrious in their affairs, and those who spend their time, so far as they are able, in idleness and pleasure, the former sort are far more amiable and desirable. Howbeit it is capable of being greatly abused. Earthly mindedness, covetousness, devouring things holy as to times and seasons of duty, usefulness, and the like pernicious vices do invade and possess the minds of men. There is no lawful calling that doth absolutely exclude this grace of being spiritually minded in them that are engaged in it, nor any that doth include it. Men may be in the meanest of lawful callings and be so, and men may be in the best and highest and not be so. Consider the calling of the ministry: the work and duty of it calls on those that are employed in it, to have their minds and thoughts conversant about spiritual and heavenly things. They are to study about them, to meditate on them, to commit them to memory, to speak them out unto others. It will be said, Surely such men must needs be spiritually minded. If they go no farther than what is mentioned, I say they must needs be so, as printers must needs be learned, who are continually conversant about letters. A man may with great industry engage himself in these things, and yet his mind be most remote from being spiritual. The event doth declare that it may be so, and the reasons of it are manifest. It requires as much, if not more watchfulness, more care, more humility, for a minister to be spiritually minded in the discharge of his calling, than to any sort of men in theirs. And that, as for other reasons, so because the commonness of the exercise of such thoughts, with their design upon others in their expression, will take off their power and efficacy. And he will have little benefit by his own ministry, who endeavours not in the first place, an experience in his own heart of the power of the truths which he doth teach unto others. And there is evidently as great a failing herein among us as among any other sort of Christians, as every occasion of trial doth demonstrate.

2. Although industry in any honest calling be allowable, yet unless men labour to be spiritually minded in the exercise of that industry, they have neither life nor peace.

Hereunto all the things before-mentioned, are necessary; I know not how any of them can be abated, yea, more is required than is expressed in them. If you burn this roll, another must be written, and many like things must be added unto it. And the objection from the expense of time in the observance of them, is of no force. For a man may do as much work whilst he is spiritually minded, as whilst he is carnal. Spiritual thoughts will no more hinder you in your callings than those that are vain and earthly, which all sorts of men can find leisure for in the midst of their employments. If you have filled a vessel with chaff, yet you may pour into it a great deal of water, which will be contained in the same space and vessel. And if it be necessary that you should take in much of the chaff of the world into your minds, yet are they capable of such measures of grace as shall preserve them sincere unto God.

Fifthly, This frame will never be preserved, nor the duties mentioned be ever performed in a due manner, unless we dedicate some part of our time peculiarly unto them. I speak unto them only concerning whom I suppose that they do daily set apart some portion of time unto holy duties, as prayer and reading of the word, and they find by experience that it succeeds well with them. For the most part, if they lose their seasons, they lose their duties. For some have complained, that the urgency of business, and multiplicity of occasions driving them at first from the fixed time of their duties, hath brought them into a course of neglecting duty itself. Wherefore it is our wisdom to set apart constantly some part of our time, unto the exercise of our thoughts about spiritual things in the way of meditation. And I shall close this discourse with some directions in this particular, unto them who complain of their disability for the discharge of this duty.

1. Choose and separate a fit time or season, a time of freedom from other occasions and diversions. And because it is our duty to redeem time with respect unto holy duties, such a season may be the more useful, the more the purchase of it stands us in. We are not at any time to serve God with what costs us nought, nor with any time that comes within the same rule. If we will allow only the refuse of our time unto this duty, when we have nothing else to do, and

it may be, through weariness of occasions are fit for nothing else, we are not to expect any great success in it. This is one pregnant reason why men are so cold and formal, so lifeless in spiritual duties, namely, the times and seasons which they allot unto them. When the body is wearied with the labour and occasions of the day, and, it may be, the mind in its natural faculties indisposed, even by the means of necessary refreshment, men think themselves meet to treat with God about the great concernments of his glory, and their own souls. This is that which God condemneth by his prophet, Mal. i. 8. 'And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?' Both the law of nature, and all the laws of holy institutions, do require that we should serve God with the best that we have, as all the fat of the inwards was to be offered in sacrifice. And shall we think to offer that time unto God, wherein we are unmeet to appear before an earthly ruler? Yet such in my account are the seasons, especially the evening seasons, that most men choose for the duties of their holy worship. And you may do well to consider that beyond the day and time which he hath taken unto himself by an everlasting law, how little of the choice of your time you have offered unto God as a free-will offering, that you may be excited to future diligence. If therefore you seriously intend this duty, choose the seasons for it wherein you are most fit, when even the natural vigour of your spirits is most free and active. Possibly some will say, this may be such a time as when the occasions of the world do call most earnestly for your attendance unto them. I say that is the season I would recommend. And if you can conquer your minds to redeem it for God at any rate, your endeavours in it will be prosperous. However, trust not to times that will offer themselves. Take them not up at hazard. Let the time itself be a free-will offering to God, taken from the top of the heap, or the choicest part of your useful time.

2. Preparation of mind unto a due reverence of God and spiritual things, is required previously hereunto. When we go about this duty, if we rush into thoughts of heavenly things without a due reverential preparation, we shall

quickly find ourselves at a loss. See the rule, Eccles. v. 1, 2. 'Grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear,' is required in all things wherein we have to do with him, as in this duty we have in an immediate and especial manner. Endeavour therefore, in the first place, to get your hearts deeply affected with an awful reverence of God, and a holy regard unto the heavenly nature of the things you would meditate upon. Hereby your minds will be composed, and the roots of other thoughts, be they vain or earthly, which are apt to arise and divert you from this duty, will be cast out. The principles of these contrary thoughts are like Jacob and Esau, they struggle in the same womb, and oftentimes Esau will come first forth, and for awhile seem to carry the birthright. If various thoughts do conflict in our minds, some for this world, and some for another, those for this world may carry it for a season. But where a due reverence of God hath 'cast out the bond-woman and her children,' the workings of the flesh in its vain thoughts and imaginations, the mind will be at liberty to exercise itself on spiritual things.

3. Earnest desires after a renewed sense and relish of spiritual things are required hereunto. If we engage into this duty merely on a conviction of the necessity of it, or set ourselves about it because we think we ought to do so, and it will not be well done utterly to neglect it, we may not expect to be successful in it. But when the soul hath at any time tasted that the Lord is gracious, when its meditations on him have been sweet, when spiritual things have had a savour and relish in the mind and affections, and hereon it comes unto this duty with earnest desires to have the like tastes, the like experience, yea, to have them increased; then is it in the way of a hopeful progress. And this also will make us persevere in our endeavours to go through with what we undertake; namely, when we do know by former experience what is to be attained by it, if we dig and search for it as a treasure.

If you shall think that the right discharge of this duty may be otherwise attained; if you suppose that it deserves not all this cost and charge about it; judge by what is past, whether it be not advisable to give it over and let it alone. As good lie quietly on the ground, as continually attempt

to rise, and never once effect it. Remember how many successless attempts you have made upon it, and all have come to nothing, or that which is as bad as nothing. I cannot say that in this way you shall always succeed; but I fear you will never have success in this duty, without such things as are of the same nature and use with it.

When after this preparation, you find yourselves yet perplexed and entangled, not able comfortably to persist in spiritual thoughts, unto your refreshment, take these two directions for your relief.

1. Cry and sigh to God for help and relief. Bewail the darkness, weakness, and instability of your minds, so as to groan within yourselves for deliverance. And if your designed meditations do issue only in a renewed gracious sense of your own weakness and insufficiency, with application unto God for supplies of strength, they are by no means lost as unto a spiritual account. The thoughts of Hezekiah in his meditations did not seem to have any great order or consistency, when he so expressed them: 'Like a crane or a swallow so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes failed with looking upwards: O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me;' Isa. xxxviii. 14. When the soul labours sincerely for communion with God, but sinks into broken, confused thoughts under the weight of its own weakness, yet if he looks to God for relief, his chattering and mourning will be accepted with God, and profitable unto himself.

2. Supply the brokenness of your thoughts with ejaculatory prayers, according as either the matter of them, or your defect in the management of them, doth require. So was it with Hezekiah in the instance before-mentioned: where his own meditations were weak and broken, he cries out in the midst of them, 'O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.' And meditation is properly a mixture of spiritual apprehension of God and heavenly things, in the thoughts and conceptions of the mind, with desires and supplications thereon.

It is good and profitable to have some special designed subject of meditation in our thoughts. I have at large declared before what things are the proper objects of the thoughts of them that are spiritually minded. But they may be more peculiarly considered as the matter of designed

meditation. And they may be taken out of some especial spiritual experience that we have lately had, or some warnings we have received of God, or something wherewith we have been peculiarly affected in the reading or preaching of the word, or what we find the present posture and frame of our minds and souls to require; or that which supplies all most frequently, the person and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. If any thing of this nature be peculiarly designed, antecedently unto this duty, and a season be sought for it with respect thereunto, the mind will be fixed and kept from wandering after variety of subjects, wherein it is apt to lose itself, and brings nothing to perfection.

Lastly, Be not discouraged with an apprehension, that all you can attain unto in the discharge of this duty is so little, so contemptible, as that it is to no purpose to persist in it: nor be wearied with the difficulties you meet withal in its performance. You have to do with him only in this matter, who 'will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;' whose will it is, that none should despise the day of small things. And if there be in this duty a ready mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. He that can bring into this treasure only the mites of broken desires and ejaculatory prayers, so they be his best, shall not come behind them who cast into it out of their greater abundance in ability and skill. To faint and give out because we cannot arise unto such a height as we aim at, is a fruit of pride and unbelief. He who finds himself to gain nothing by continual endeavours after holy fixed meditations, but only a living active sense of his own vileness and unworthiness, is a sufficient gainer by all his pains, cost, and charge. But ordinarily it shall not be so; constancy in the duty will give ability for it. Those who conscientiously abide in its performance, shall increase in light, wisdom, and experience, until they are able to manage it with great success. These few plain directions may possibly be of some use unto the weaker sort of Christians, when they find a disability in themselves unto the discharge of this duty, wherein those who are spiritually minded ought to be peculiarly exercised.

PART II.

CHAP. XI.

The seat of spiritual mindedness in the affections. The nature and use of them. The ways and means used by God himself, to call the affections of men from the world.

In the account given at the entrance of this discourse, of what it is to be spiritually minded, it was reduced under these heads.

The first, was the habitual frame, disposition, and inclination of the mind in its affections.

The second, was the usual exercise of the mind in its thoughts, meditations, and desires about heavenly things.

Whereunto, thirdly, was added, the complacency of mind in that relish and savour which it finds in spiritual things, so thought and meditated on.

The second of these hath hitherto alone been spoken unto, as that which leads the way unto the others, and gives the most sensible evidence of the state inquired after. Therein consists the stream, which rising in the fountain of our affections, runs into a holy rest and complacency of mind.

The first and last I shall now handle together, and therein comprehend the account of what it is to be spiritually minded.

Spiritual affections, whereby the soul adheres unto spiritual things, taking in such a savour and relish of them, as wherein it finds rest and satisfaction, is the peculiar spring and substance of our being spiritually minded. This is that which I shall now farther explain and confirm.

The great contest of heaven and earth is about the affections of the poor worm, which we call man. That the world should contend for them, is no wonder. It is the best that it can pretend unto. All things here below, are capable of no higher ambition, than to be possessed of the affections of men. And as they lie under the curse, it can do us no

greater mischief, than by prevailing in this design. But that the holy God should as it were engage in the contest, and strive for the affections of man, is an effect of infinite condescension and grace. This he doth expressly; 'My son,' saith he, 'give me thy heart;' Prov. xxiii. 26. It is our affections he asketh for, and comparatively nothing else; to be sure he will accept of nothing from us without them, The most fat and costly sacrifice will not be accepted, if it be without a heart. All the ways and methods of the dispensation of his will, by his word, all the designs of his effectual grace, are suited unto, and prepared for this end, namely, to recover the affections of man unto himself. So he expresseth himself concerning his word; Deut. x. 12. 'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love, and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?' And as unto the word of his grace, he declares it unto the same purpose, Deut. xxx. 6. 'And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed; to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.'

And on the other side, all the artifices of the world, all the paint it puts on its face, all the great promises it makes, all the false appearances and attires it clothes itself withal by the help of Satan, have no other end but to draw and keep the affections of men unto itself. And if the world be preferred before God, in this address which is made unto us for our affections, we shall justly perish with the world unto eternity; and be rejected by him whom we have rejected; Prov. i. 24, 25. 31.

Our affections are upon the matter our all. They are all we have to give or bestow; the only power of our souls, whereby, if we may give away ourselves from ourselves, and become another's. Other faculties of our souls, even the most noble of them, are suited to receive in unto our own advantage: by our affections we can give away what we are and have. Hereby, we give our hearts unto God, as he requireth. Wherefore unto him we give our affections, unto whom we give our all, ourselves, and all that we have; and to whom we give them not, whatever we give, upon the matter, we give nothing at all.

In what we do unto, or for others; whatsoever is good, valuable, or praiseworthy in it, proceeds from the affections wherewith we do it. To do any thing for others without an animating affection, is but a contempt of them; for we judge them really unworthy, that we should do any thing for them. To give to the poor upon their importunity, without pity or compassion; to supply the wants of saints without love or kindness; with other actings and duties of the like nature, are things of no value; things that recommend us neither unto God nor men. It is so in general with God and the world. Whatsoever we do in the service of God, whatever duty we perform on his command, whatever we undergo, or suffer for his name's sake, if it proceed not from the cleaving of our souls unto him by our affections, it is despised by him; he owns us not. 'As if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned;' Cant. viii. 7. It is not to be bought nor purchased with riches; so if a man would give to God all the substance of his house without love, it would in like manner be despised. And however, on the other hand, we may be diligent, industrious, and sedulous in and about the things of this world, yet if it have not our affections, we are not of the world, we belong not unto it. They are the seat of all sincerity, which is the jewel of divine and human conversation, the life and soul of every thing that is good and praiseworthy; whatever men pretend, as their affections are, so are they. Hypocrisy is a deceitful interposition of the mind, on various reasons and pretences, between men's affections and their profession, whereby a man appears to be what he is not. Sincerity is the open avowment of the reality of men's affections, which renders them good and useful.

Affections are in the soul, as the helm in the ship; if it be laid hold on by a skilful hand, he turneth the whole vessel which way he pleaseth. If God hath the powerful hand of his grace upon our affections, he turns our souls unto a compliance with his institutions, instructions, in mercy, affections, trials, all sorts of providences, and holds them firm against all winds and storms of temptation, that they shall not hurry them on pernicious dangers. Such a soul alone is tractable and pliable unto all intimations of God's will.

All others are stubborn and obstinate, stout-hearted and

far from righteousness. And when the world hath the hand on our affections, it turns the mind, with the whole industry of the soul, unto its interest and concerns. And it is in vain to contend with any thing that hath the power of our affections in its disposal; it will prevail at last.

On all these considerations, it is of the highest importance to consider aright, how things are stated in our affections, and what is the prevailing bent of them. 'Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,' saith the wise man, Prov. xxvii. 17. Every man hath his edge, which may be sharpened by outward helps and advantages. The predominant inclination of a man's affections, is his edge. According as that is set, so he cutteth and works; that way, he is sharp and keen, but blunt unto all other things.

Now because it must be, that our affections are either spiritual or earthly in a prevailing degree, that either God hath our hearts, or the world; that our edge is towards heaven, or towards things here below; before I come to give an account of the nature and operations of spiritual affections, I shall consider and propose some of those arguments and motives which God is pleased to make use of to call off our affections from the desirable things of this world: for as they are weighty and cogent, such as cannot be neglected without the greatest contempt of divine wisdom and goodness, so they serve to press and enforce those arguments and motives that are proposed unto us to set our affections on things that are above, which is to be spiritually minded.

First, He hath in all manner of instances poured contempt on the things of this world, in comparison of things spiritual and heavenly. All things here below were at first made beautiful and in order, and were declared by God himself to be exceeding good, and that not only in their being and nature, but in the use whereunto they were designed. They were then desirable unto men, and the enjoyment of them would have been a blessing without danger of temptation: for they were the ordinance of God to lead us unto the knowledge of him, and love unto him. But since the entrance of sin, whereby the world fell under the curse, and into the power of Satan, the things of it in his management are become effectual means to draw off the heart and affections

from God. For it is the world, and the things of it, as summed up by the apostle, 1 John ii. 15, 16. that strive alone for our affections to be the object of them. Sin and Satan do but woo for the world to take them off from God: by them doth the God of this world blind the eyes of them that believe not; and the principal way whereby he worketh in them, is by promises of satisfaction unto all the lusts of the minds of men, with a proposal of whatever is dreadful and terrible in the want of them. Being now in this state and condition, and used unto this end, through the craft of Satan and the folly of the minds of men, God hath shewed, by various instances, that they are all vain, empty, unsatisfactory, and every way to be despised in comparison of things eternal.

1. He did it most eminently and signally in the life, death, and cross of Christ. What can be seen or found in this world, after the Son of God hath spent his life in it, not having where to lay his head; and after he went out of it on the cross? Had there been aught of real worth in things here below, certainly he had enjoyed it, if not crowns and empires, which were all in his power, yet such goods and possessions as men of sober reasonings and moderate affections do esteem a competency. But things were quite otherwise disposed, to manifest that there is nothing of value or use in these things, but only to support nature unto the performance of service unto God, wherein they are serviceable unto eternity. He never attained, he never enjoyed, more than daily supplies of bread out of the stores of providence, and which alone he hath instructed us to pray for; Matt. viii. 20. In his cross the world proclaimed all its good qualities and all its powers, and hath given unto them that believe, its naked face to view and contemplate. Nor is it now one jot more comely than it was when it had gotten Christ on the cross. Hence is that inference and conclusion of the apostle; Gal. vi. 14. 'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' Since I have believed, since I have had a sense of the power and virtue of the cross of Christ, I have done with all things in this world; it is a dead thing unto me, nor have I any affection for it. This is that which made the difference between the promises of the old

covenant and the new. For they were many of them about temporal things, the good things of this world, and this life: those of the new are mostly of things spiritual and eternal. God would not call off the church wholly from a regard unto these things, until he had given a sufficient demonstration of their emptiness, vanity, and insufficiency, in the cross of Christ; 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.

Whither so fast my friend? What meaneth this rising so early and going to bed late, eating the bread of carefulness? Why this diligence, why these contrivances, why these savings and hoardings of riches and wealth? To what end is all this care and counsel? Alas! saith one, it is to get that which is enough in and of this world, for me and my children, to prefer them, to raise an estate for them, which, if not so great as others, may yet be a competency; to give them some satisfaction in their lives, and some reputation in the world. Fair pretences; neither shall I ever discourage any from the exercise of industry in their lawful callings. But yet I know, that with many, this is but a pretence and covering for a shameful engagement of their affections unto the world. Wherefore, in all these things, be persuaded sometimes to have an eye to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: behold how he is set before us in the gospel, poor, despised, reproached, persecuted, nailed to the cross, and all by this world. Whatever be your designs and aims, let his cross continually interpose between your affections and this world. If you are believers, your hopes are within a few days to be with him for evermore. Unto him you must give an account of yourselves, and what you have done in this world: will it be accepted with him to declare what you have saved of this world, what you have gained, what you have preserved, and embraced yourselves in, and what you have left behind you? was this any part of his employment and business in this world; hath he left us an example for any such course? Wherefore, no man can set his affections on things here below, who hath any regard unto the pattern of Christ, or is any measure influenced with the power and efficacy of his cross. 'My love is crucified,' said a holy martyr of old: he whom his soul loved was so, and in him his love unto all things here below. Do you therefore find your affections ready to be engaged unto, or too much entangled with, the

things of this world? are your desires of increasing them, your hopes of keeping them, your fears of losing them, your love unto them, and delight in them, operative in your minds, possessing your thoughts, and influencing your conversations? Turn aside a little, and by faith contemplate the life and death of the Son of God; a blessed glass will it be, where you may see what contemptible things they are which you perplex yourselves about. Oh, that any of us should love or esteem the things of this world, the power, riches, goods, or reputation of it, who have had a spiritual view of them in the cross of Christ.

It may be, it will be said, that the circumstances mentioned were necessary unto the Lord Christ, with respect unto the especial work he had to do, as the Saviour and Redeemer of the church; and therefore it doth not thence follow, that we ought to be poor, and want all things as he did. I confess it doth not, and therefore do all along make an allowance for honest industry in our callings. But this follows unavoidably hereon; that what he did forego and trample on for our sake, that ought not to be the object of our affections, nor can such affections prevail in us, if he dwell in our hearts by faith.

2. He hath done the same in his dealings with the apostles, and generally with all that have been most dear unto him, and instrumental unto the interest of his glory in the world, especially since life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. He had great work to do by the apostles, and that of the greatest use unto his interest and kingdom. The laying of the foundations of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world was committed unto them. Who would not think that he should provide for them, if not principalities or popedoms, yet at least archbishopricks and bishopricks, with other good ecclesiastical dignities and preferments? Hereby might they have been made meet to converse with princes, and had been freed from the contempt of the vulgar. But Infinite Wisdom did otherwise dispose of them and their concerns in this world. For as God was pleased to exercise them with the common afflictions and calamities of this life, which he makes use of to take off the sweetness of present enjoyments, so they lived and died

in a condition of poverty, distress, persecution, and reproach. God set them forth as examples unto other ends, namely, of light, grace, zeal, and holiness in their lives, so to manifest of how little concernment unto our own blessedness, or an interest in his love, is the abundance of all things here below; as also, that the want of them all may consist with the highest participation of his love and favour; 1 Cor. iv. 9. 11—13. 'For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and unto angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.' And if the consideration hereof be not of weight with others, undoubtably it ought to be so with them who are called to preach the gospel, and are the successors to the apostles. There can be nothing more uncouth, absurd, and shameful, nothing more opposite unto the intimation of the wisdom and will of God in his dealings with those first and most honourable dispensers of it, than for such persons to seek and follow greedily after secular advantages, in worldly powers, riches, wealth, and honour. Hence there hath been, in former ages, an endeavour to separate such persons as were by any means dedicated unto the ministry of the gospel, from all secular dignities and revenues. Yea, some maintained that they were to enjoy nothing of their own, but were to live on alms, or the free contributions of the people. But this was quickly condemned as heresy in Wickliff and others. Yet another sort set up, that would pretend thereunto as unto themselves, though they would not oblige all others unto the same rule. This produced some swarms of begging friars, whom they of the church, who were in possession of wealth and power, thought meet to laugh at and let alone: of late years, this contest is at an end. The clergy have happily gotten the victory, and esteem all due unto them that they can by any ways obtain; nor is there any greater crime than for a man to be otherwise minded. But these things are not our

present concernment. From the beginning it was not so: and it is well if, in such a way, men are able to maintain the frame of mind inquired after, which is life and peace.

3. God continues to cast contempt on these things, by giving always incomparably the greatest portion of them unto the vilest men, and his own avowed enemies. This was a temptation under the old covenant, but is highly instructive under the new. None will judge those things to be of real value, which a wise man casts out daily unto swine, making little or no use of them in his family. Those monsters of men, Nero and Heliogabalus, had more interest in, and more power over, the things of this world, than ever had the best of men. Such villains in nature, so pernicious unto human society, that their not being was the interest of mankind; but yet more of the world poured on them, than they knew either how to enjoy, possess, use, or abuse. Look on all the principal treasures and powers of this world, as in the hand of one of these monsters, and there disposed of by divine providence, and you may see at what rate God values them.

At this day, the greatest, most noble, wealthy, and fruitful parts of the earth, are given unto the great Turk, with some other eastern potentates, either Mahometans or Pagans, who are prepared for eternal destruction. And if we look nearer home, we may see in whose hands is the power of the chiefest nations of Europe, and unto what end it is used. The utmost of what some Christian professors among ourselves are intent and designing upon, as that which would render them wondrous happy in their own apprehensions, put hundreds of them together, and it would not answer the waste made by the forementioned beasts every day.

Doth not God proclaim herein, that the things of this world are not to be valued or esteemed? if they were so, and had a real worth in themselves, would the holy and righteous God make such a distribution of them? The most of those whom he loves, who enjoy his favour, not only comparatively have the meanest share of them, but are exercised with all the evils that the destitution and want of them can be accompanied withal: his open and avowed enemies, in the mean time, have more than they know what to do withal. Who would set his heart and affections

on those things which God poureth into the bosoms of the vilest men, to be a snare unto them here, and an aggravation of their condemnation for ever? It seems, you may go and take the world, and take the curse, death and hell along with it, and 'what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' What can any man do on the consideration hereof, who will not forego all his hopes and expectations from God, but retreat unto the faith of things spiritual and eternal, as containing an excellency in them incomparably above all that be enjoyed here below?

4. He doth continue to give perpetual instances of their uncertainty and unsatisfactoriness in the utter disappointment of men that have had expectations from them. The ways hereof are various, and the instances so multiplied, as that most men in the world, unless they are like the fool in the gospel, who bade his soul take its ease for many years, because his barns were full, live in perpetual fears and apprehensions, that they shall speedily lose whatever they enjoy; or are under the power of stupid security. But as unto this consideration of them, there is such an account given by the wise man, as unto which nothing can be added, or which no reason or experience is able to contradict; Eccles. ii. By these and the like ways doth God cast contempt on all things here below; discovering the folly and falseness of the promises which the world makes use of to allure our affections unto itself. This therefore is to be laid as the foundation in all our considerations, unto what or whom we shall cleave by our affections, that God hath not only declared the insufficiency of these things, to give us that rest and happiness which we seek after, but also poured contempt upon them, in his holy, wise disposal of them in the world.

Secondly, God hath added unto their vanity, by shortening the lives of men, reducing their continuance in this world unto so short and uncertain a season, as it is impossible they should take any solid satisfaction in what they enjoy here below. So it is expressed by the psalmist; 'Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and my age is nothing before thee.' Hence he draws two conclusions.

1. That 'every man at his best estate, is but vanity.'

2. That 'every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them;' Psal. xxxix. 5, 6. The uncertainty and shortness of the lives of men, render all their endeavours and contrivances about earthly things both vain and foolish. When men lived eight or nine hundred years, they had opportunity to suck out all the sweetness that was in creature comforts, to make large provisions of them, and to have long projections about them. But when they had so, they all issued in that violence, oppression, and wickedness, which brought the flood on the world of ungodly men. And it still so abides; the more of, and the longer men enjoy these things, the more, without the sovereign preservative of grace, will they abound in sin and provocations of God. But God hath reduced the life of man unto the small pittance of seventy years; casting what may fall out of a longer continuance into travail and sorrow. Besides, that space is shortened with the most, by various and innumerable incidences and occasions. Wherefore in these seventy years, consider how long it is before men begin to have a taste or gust of the things of this life; how many things fall in cross, to make us weary of them before the end of our days; how few among us, not one of a thousand, attain that age; what is the uncertainty of all men living, as to the continuance of their lives unto the next day; and we shall see that the holy, wise God, hath left no such season for their enjoyment, as might put a value upon them. And when, on the other hand, it is remembered, that this man who is of such short continuance in this world, is yet made for eternity, eternal blessedness or misery, which state depends wholly on his interest in things above, and setting his affections on them, they must forfeit all their reason, as well as bid defiance unto the grace of God, who give them up unto things below.

Thirdly, God hath openly and fully declared the danger that is in these things, as unto their enjoyment and use; and what multitudes of souls miscarry, by an inordinate adherence unto them! For they are the matter of those temptations, whereby the souls of men are ruined for ever; the fuel that supplies the fire of their lusts, until they are consumed by it.

Men, under the power of spiritual convictions, fall not into sin, fail not eternally, but by the means of temptation; that is the mire wherein this rush doth grow. For others, who live and die in the madness and wildness of nature, without any restraint in their minds from the power of convictions, they need no external temptations, but only opportunities to exert their lusts. But for those who by any means are convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, so as to design the ordering of their lives, with respect unto the sense they have of them, they fall not into actual sin, but upon temptations. That, whatever it be, which causeth, occasioneth, and prevaileth on a convinced person unto sin, that is temptation. Wherefore this is the great means of the ruin of the souls of men.

Now, though there are many principles of temptation, many causes that actually concur unto its efficacy, as sin, Satan, and other men, yet the matter of almost all ruinous temptations is taken out of this world, and the things of it. Thence doth Satan take all his darts; thence do evil men derive all the ways and means whereby they corrupt others; and from thence is all the fuel of sin and lust taken. And which adds unto this evil, all that is in the world, contributes its utmost thereunto. 'All that is in the world,' is 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;' 1 John ii. 16. It is not a direct formal annumeration of the things that are in the world, nor a distribution of them under several heads; but it is so of the principal lusts of the minds of men, whereunto all things in the world are subservient. Wherefore, not only the matter of all temptations is taken out of the world, but every thing that is in the world is apt and fit to be abused unto that end. For it were easy to shew that there is nothing desirable or valuable in this whole world, but it is reducible unto a subserviency unto one or other of these lusts, and is applicable unto the interest and service of temptations and sins.

When men hear of these things, they are apt to say, let the dream be unto them that are openly wicked, and the interpretation of it unto them that are profligate in sin. Unto unclean persons, drunkards, oppressors, proud ambitious persons, it may be, it is so; but as unto them, they use the things of this world with a due moderation, so as they are

no snare unto them. But to own they are used unto what end soever, if the affections of men are set upon them, one way or other, there is nothing in the world but is thus a snare and temptation. However we should be very careful how we adhere unto, or undervalue that which is the cause and means of the ruin of multitudes of souls. By the warnings given us hereof, doth God design, as unto the use of means, to teach us the vanity and danger of fixing our affections on things below.

Fourthly, Things are so ordered in the holy, wise dispensation of God's providence, that it requires much spiritual wisdom to distinguish between the use and the abuse of these things; between a lawful care about them, and an inordinate cleaving unto them. Few distinguish aright here; and therefore in these things will many find their great mistake at the last day. The disappointments that they will fall under, as to what concerns their earthly enjoyments, and the use of them wherewith they were intrusted, see Matt. xxv. 34. to the end of the chapter.

It is granted that there is a lawful use of these things, a lawful care and industry about them. So it is also acknowledged, it cannot be denied, that there is an abuse of them springing from an inordinate love, and cleaving unto them. But here men deceive themselves, taking their measures by the most crooked uncertain rules. Some make their own inclinations the rule and measure of what is lawful and allowable; some the examples of others; some the course of the world; some their own real or pretended necessities. They confess that there is an inordinate love of those things, and an abuse of them, in excesses of various sorts, which the Scripture plainly affirms, and which experience gives open testimony unto. But as unto their state and circumstances, their care, love, and industry, are all allowable. That which influenceth all these persons, is self-love, which inveterate corrupt affections, and false reasonings, do make an application of unto these occasions.

Hence we have men approving of themselves as just stewards of their enjoyments, whilst others judge them hard, covetous, earthly minded; no way laying out what they are intrusted withal, unto the glory of God, in any due proportion. Others also think not amiss of themselves in

this kind, who live in palpable excesses, either of pride of life, or sensual pleasures, vain apparel, and the like. So in particular, most men, in their feastings and entertainments, walk in direct contempt of the rules which our Saviour gives in that case, Luke xiv. 12—14. and yet approve themselves therein.

But what if any of us should be mistaken in our rule and application of it unto our conditions? Men at sea may have a fair gale of wind wherewith they may sail freely and smoothly for a season, and yet, instead of being brought into a port, be cast by it at last on destructive shelves or rocks.

And what if that which we esteem allowable love, care, and industry, should prove to be the fruit of earthly affections, inordinate and predominant in us; what if we miss in our measures, and that which we approve of in ourselves, should be disapproved of God: we are cast for ever; we belong unto the world, and with the world we shall perish.

It may be said, that if it be so difficult to distinguish between these things, namely, the lawful use of things here below, and their abuse, the allowable industry about them, and the inordinate love of them, on the knowledge whereof our eternal conditions depends; it is impossible but men must spend their time in solicitous anxiety of mind, as not knowing when they have aright discharged their duty.

Ans. 1. I press these things at present no farther, but only to shew how dangerous a thing it is for any to incline in his affections unto the things of this world, wherein an excess is ruinous, and hardly discoverable. Surely no wise man will venture freely and frequently unto the edge of such a precipice. He will be jealous of his measures, lest they will not hold by the rule of the word. And a due sense hereof is the best preservative of the soul from cleaving inordinately unto these things below. And when God, in any instance, by afflictions or otherwise, shews unto believers their transgression herein, and how they have exceeded, Job xxxviii. 8, 9. it makes them careful for the future. They will now or never be diligent, that they fall not under that peremptory rule, 1 John ii. 14.

2. Where the soul is upright and sincere, there is no need in this case of any more solicitousness or anxiety of mind, than there is unto or about other duties. But when

it is biassed and acted by self-love, and its more strong inclinations unto things present, it is impossible men should enjoy solid peace, or be freed from severe reflections on them by their own consciences, in such seasons wherein they are awakened unto their duty, and the consideration of their state; nor have I any thing to tender for their relief. With others it is not so; and therefore I shall so far digress in this place, as to give some directions unto those who in sincerity would be satisfied in this lawful use and enjoyment of earthly things; so as not to adhere unto them with inordinate affections.

1. Remember always that you are not proprietors, nor absolute possessors of these things, but only stewards of them. With respect unto men, you are or may be just proprietors of what you enjoy; with respect unto him who is the great Possessor of heaven and earth, you are but stewards. This stewardship we are to give an account of, as we are taught in the parable, Luke xvi. 1, 2. This rule always attended unto, will be a blessed guide in all instances and occasions of duty.

But if a man be left in trust with houses and large possessions, as a steward for the right lord, owner, and proprietor of them; if he fall into a pleasing dream, that they are all his own, and use them accordingly; it will be a woful surprisal unto him, when he shall be called to account for all he hath received and laid out, whether he will or no. And when indeed he hath nothing to pay. It will scarce be otherwise with them at the great day, who forget the trust which is committed to them, and suppose they may do what they will with what they call their own.

2. There is nothing in the ways of getting, enjoying, or using of these things, but giveth its own evidence unto spiritual wisdom, whether it be within the bounds of duty or no. Men are not lightly deceived herein, but when they are evidently under the power of corrupt affections, or will not at all attend unto themselves and the language of their own consciences. It is a man's own fault alone, if he know not wherein he doth exceed.

A due examination of ourselves in the sight of God, with respect unto these things, the frame and actings of our minds in them, will greatly give check unto our cor-

rupt inclinations, and discover the folly of those reasonings, whereby we deceive ourselves into the love of earthly things, or justify ourselves therein, and bring to light the secret principle of self-love, which is the root of all this evil.

3. If you would be able to make a right judgment in this case, be sure that you have another object for your affections, which hath a predominant interest in your minds, and which will evidence itself so to have on all occasions. Let a man be never so observant of himself, as unto all outward duties required of him, with respect unto these earthly things; let him be liberal in the disposal of them on all occasions; let him be watchful against all intemperance and excesses in the use of them; yet, if he hath not another object for his affections, which hath a prevailing influence upon them, if they are not set upon the things that are above, one way or other, it is the world that hath the possession of his heart. For the affections of our minds will, and must be placed in chief, on things below, or things above; there will be a predominant love in us; and therefore, although all our actions should testify another frame, yet if God, and the things of God, be not the principal object of our affections, by one way or other, unto the world we do belong: this is that which is taught us so expressly by our Saviour, Luke xvi. 9—13. 'And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon.'

4. Labour continually for the mortification of your affections unto the things of this world. They are in the state of corrupted nature set and fixed on them, nor will any reasonings or considerations effectually divert them, or take them off in a due manner, unless they are mortified unto

them by the cross of Christ. Whatever change be otherwise wrought in them, it will be of no advantage unto us. It is mortification alone that will take them off from earthly things unto the glory of God. Hence the apostle, having given us that charge, 'Set your affections on things above, and not on things below on the earth,' Col. iii. 2. adds this as the only way and means we may do so, 'Mortify therefore your members that are on the earth;' ver. 5. Let no man think that his affections will fall off from earthly things of their own accord. The keenness and sharpness of them, in many things, may be abated by the decay of their natural powers in age, and the like: they may be mated by frequent disappointments, by sicknesses, pains, and afflictions, as we shall see immediately; or they may be willing unto a distribution of earthly enjoyments, to have the reputation of it, wherein they still cleave unto the world, but under another shape and appearance. They may be startled by convictions, so as to do many things gladly, that belong to another frame: but, on one pretence or other, under one appearance or other, they will for ever adhere or cleave unto earthly things, unless they are mortified unto them, through faith in the blood and cross of Christ; Gal. vi. 14. Whatever thoughts you may have of yourselves in this matter, unless you have the experience of a work of mortification on your affections, you can have no refreshing ground of assurance, that you are in any thing spiritually minded.

5. In all instances of duty belonging unto your stewardship of earthly things, attend diligently unto the rule of the word: without this, the grace exhorted unto may be abused. So of old, under a pretence of a relinquishment of the things of this world, because of the danger in adhering unto them; their own superstition, and the craft of other men, prevailed with many to part with all they had unto the service of others, not better, it may be, not so good as themselves. This evil wholly arose from want of attendance unto the rule of truth, which gives no such direction in ordinary cases. But there is not much seen in these days of an excess in that kind. But, on the other hand, in all instances of duties of this nature, most men's minds are habitually influenced with pretences, reasonings, and considerations, that turn the scales as unto what they ought to do in proportion

in this duty, on the side of the world. If you would be safe, you must, in all instances of duty, as in works of charity, piety, and compassion, give authority in and over your souls, unto the rule of the word. Let neither self nor unbelief, nor the custom and example of others, be heard to speak; but let the rule alone be attended unto, and to what that speaks, yield obedience.

Unless these things are found in us, none of us, no man living, if it be not so with him, can have any refreshing evidence or assurance, that he is not under the power of an inordinate, yea, and predominant love unto this world.

And indeed to add a little farther on the occasion of this digression, it is a sad thing to have this exception made against the state of any man, on just grounds; yea, but he loves the world. He is sober and industrious; he is constant in duties of religion, it may be, an earnest preacher of them, a man of sound principles, and blameless as unto the excesses of life; but he loves the world. The question is, how doth this appear? it may be, what you say is but one of those evil surmises which all things are filled withal. Wherefore I speak it not at all to give countenance unto the rash judging of others, which none are more prone unto than those who one way or other are eminently guilty themselves: but I would have every man judge himself, that we be none of us condemned of the Lord. If, notwithstanding the things mentioned, any of us do centre in self, which is supplied and filled with the world: if we prefer self above all other things, do aim at the satisfaction of self in what we do well or ill, are useless unto the only good and blessed ends of these earthly things, in supplying the wants of others, according unto the proportions wherewith we are intrusted; it is to be feared, that the world, and the things that are in it, have the principal interest in our affections.

And the danger is yet greater with them who divert on the other extreme. Such are they, who, in the pride of life, vanity in apparel, excess in drinking, pampering the flesh every day, tread close on the heels of the world, if they do not also fully keep company with it. Altogether in vain is it for such persons to countenance themselves with an appearance of other graces in them, or the sedulous performance of other duties. This one rule will eternally prevail

against them; 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' And by the way, let men take heed how they walk in any instance against the known judgment and practice of the wiser or more experienced sort of Christians, to their regret and sorrow, if not unto their offence and scandal, or in any way whereunto they win the consent of their own light and conscience, by such reasonings and considerations, as will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. Yet thus, and no otherwise, is it with all them who, under a profession of religion, do indulge unto any excesses wherein they are conformed unto the world.

Fifthly, God makes a hedge against the excess of the affections of men, rational and any way enlightened, unto the things of this world, by suffering the generality of men to carry the use of them, and to be carried by the abuse of them, into actings so filthy, so abominable, so ridiculous, as reason itself cannot but abhor. Men by them transform themselves into beasts and monsters, as might be manifested by all sorts of instances: hence the wise man prayed against riches, lest he should not be able to manage the temptations wherewith they are accompanied; Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

Lastly, To close this matter, and to shew us what we are to expect, in case we set our affections on things here below, and they have thereby a predominant interest in our hearts, God hath positively determined and declared, that if it be so, he will have nothing to do with us, nor will accept of those affections which we pretend we can, and do spare for him, and spiritual things. If we abstain from open sins, if we abhor the lewdness and uncleanness of men in the world, if we are constant in religious duties, and give ourselves up to walk after the most strict sort in religion, like Paul, in his Pharisaism, may we not, will some say or think, find acceptance with God, though our hearts cleave inordinately unto the things of this world? I say, God hath peremptorily determined the contrary; and if other arguments will not prevail with us, he leaves us at last unto this, Go, love the world and the things of it; but know assuredly you do it unto the eternal loss of your souls; 1 John ii. 15. James iv. These few instances have I given of the arguments and motives whereby God is pleased to deter us from fixing our

affections on things here below. And they are most of them such only, as he maketh use of in the administration of his providence. There are two other heads of things that offer themselves unto our consideration.

1. The ways, means, arguings, and enticements which the world makes use of, to draw, keep, and secure the affections of men unto itself.

2. The secret, powerful efficacy of grace, in taking off the heart from these things, turning and drawing it unto God, with the arguments and motives that the Holy Spirit maketh use of, in and by the word unto this end; and wherein we must shew what is the act of conquering grace, wherein the heart is finally prevailed on, to choose and adhere unto God in love immutable. But these things cannot be handled in any measure, according to their nature and importance, without such length of discourse, as I cannot here divert unto. I shall therefore proceed unto that which is the proper and peculiar subject before us.

CHAP. XII.

What is required in, and unto our affections, that they may be spiritual. A threefold work on the affections described.

To declare the interest of our affections in this frame of being spiritually minded, and what they contribute thereunto, I shall do these three things:

First, Declare what is required hereunto, that our affections may be spiritual, wherein lies the foundation of the whole duty.

Secondly, What are their actings when they are so spiritual.

Thirdly, What are the means whereby they may be kept and preserved in that frame, with sundry other things of the like nature, how our affections are concerned in, or do belong unto the frame of mind inquired after, hath been before declared. Without spiritual affections, we cannot be spiritually minded. And that they may be of this use, three things are required.

First, Their principle.

Secondly, Their object.

Thirdly, The way and manner of their application unto their proper object, by virtue of that principle.

First, As unto the principle acting in them, that our affections may be spiritual, and the spring of our being spiritually minded, it is required that they be changed, renewed, and inlaid with grace, spiritual and supernatural. To clear the sense hereof, we must a little consider, what is their state by nature, and then, by what means they may be wrought upon, as unto a change, or a renovation. For they are like unto some things, which in themselves, and their own nature, are poisonous; but being corrected, and receiving a due temperament from a mixture of other ingredients, become medicinal, and of excellent use.

1. By nature our affections, all of them, are depraved and corrupted. Nothing in the whole nature of man, no power or faculty of the soul, is fallen under greater disorder and depravation by the entrance of sin, than our affections are. In and by them is the heart wholly gone and turned off from God; Titus. iii. 3. It were a long work to set forth this depravation of our affections, nor doth it belong unto our present design. Some few things I shall briefly observe concerning it, to make way unto what is proposed concerning their change.

1. This is the only corruption and depravation of our nature, by the fall evident in and unto reason, or the light of nature itself. Those who were wise among the heathen, both saw it and complained of it. They found a weakness in the mind, but saw nothing of its darkness and depravation as unto things spiritual. But they were sensible enough of this disorder and tumult of the affections in things moral, which renders the minds of men like a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. This greatly aggravates the neglect of them who are not sensible of it in themselves, seeing it is discernible in the light of nature.

2. They are as depraved, the seat and subject of all lusts, both of the flesh and of the spirit. Yea, lust or evil concupiscence is nothing but the irregular motion and acting of our affections, as depraved, defiled, corrupted;

Rom. vii. 9. Hence, no one sin can be mortified without a change wrought in the affections.

3. They are the spring, root, and cause of all actual sin in the world; Matt. xv. 9. The evil heart in the Scripture, is the corrupt affections of it, with the imaginations of the mind whereby they are excited and acted; Gen. vi. 5. These are they which at this time fill the whole world with wickedness, darkness, confusion, and terror: and we may learn what is their force and efficacy from these effects. So the nature of the plague is most evident, when we see thousands dying of it every week.

4. They are the way and means whereby the soul applies itself unto all sinful objects and actings. Hence are they called our members, our earthly members; because, as the body applies itself unto its operations by its members, so doth the soul apply itself unto what belongs unto it, by its affections; Rom. vi. 13. Col. iii. 5.

5. They will not be under the conduct of the mind, its light, or convictions. Rebellion against the light of the mind, is the very form whereby their corruption acts itself; Job. xxiv. 13. Let the apprehensions of the mind, and its notions of good and evil be what they will, they reject them, and lead the soul in pursuit of their inclinations. Hence, no natural man whatsoever doth in any measure answer the light of his mind, or the convictions of his understanding; but he sees and approves of better things following those that are worse. And there is no greater spiritual judgment, than for men to be given up unto themselves, and their own evil affections; Rom. i. 26.

Many other instances might be given of the greatness of that depravation which our affections are fallen under by sin; these may suffice as unto our present purpose.

In general, this depravation of our affections by nature may be reduced unto two heads.

1. An utter aversation from God and all spiritual things. In this lies the spring of all that dislike of God and his ways, that the hearts of men are filled withal. Yea, they do not only produce an aversation from them, and dislike of them, but they fill the mind with an enmity against them. Therefore, men say in their hearts unto God, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy

ways: what is the Almighty that we should serve him? or what profit should we have if we pray unto him?' Job. xxi. 14, 15. See Rom. i. 28. viii. 7, 8.

2. An inordinate cleaving unto things vain, earthly, and sensual; causing the soul to engage into the pursuit of them, as the horse rushes into the battle.

Whilst our affections are in this state and condition, we are far enough from being spiritually minded; nor is it possible to engage them into an adherence unto, or delight in, spiritual things.

In this state, they may be two ways wrought upon, and yet not so renewed, as to be serviceable unto this end.

1. There may be various temporary impressions made on them; sometimes there is so by the preaching of the word. Hereon men may hear it with joy, and do many things gladly. Sometimes it is so by judgments, dangers, sicknesses, apprehensions of the approach of death; Psal. xxxiv. 78. xxxv. 37. These things take men off for a season from their greedy delight in earthly things, and the pursuit of the interest of lust in making provision for the flesh. On many other occasions, by great variety of causes, there may be temporary impressions made on the affections, that shall seem for a season to have turned the stream of them. And thereon we have many, who every day will be wholly as it were for God, resolved to forsake sin, and all the pleasures of it; but the next return unto all their former excesses. For this is the effect of those impressions, that whereas men ordinarily are predominantly acted by love, desire, and delight, which lead them to act according unto the true natural principles of the soul: now they are for a season acted by fear, and dread, which put a kind of force on all their inclinations. Hereon they have other thoughts of good and evil, of things eternal and temporal, of God and their own duty, for a season. And hereon, some of them may, and do persuade themselves, that there is a change in their hearts and affections, which there is not; like a man who persuades himself that he hath lost his ague, because his present fit is over. The next trial of temptation carries them away again unto the world and sin.

There are sometimes sudden impressions made on spiri-

tual affections, which are always of great advantage to the soul, renewing its engagements unto God and duty. So was it with Jacob; Gen. xxviii. 16—20. So is it often with believers in hearing the word, and other occasions. On all of them they renew their cleavings unto God with love and delight. But the effect of these impressions on unrenewed affections, are neither spiritual nor durable. Yea, for the most part, they are but checks given in the providence of God, unto the raging of their lusts; Psal. ix. 20.

2. They are liable unto an habitual change. This the experience of all ages gives testimony to. There may be an habitual change wrought in the passions and affections of the mind, as unto the inordinate and violent pursuit of their inclinations, without any gracious renovation of them. Education, philosophy, or reason, long afflictions, spiritual light and gifts, have wrought this change. So Saul, upon his call to be king, became another man. Hereby, persons naturally passionate and furious have been made sedate and moderate; and those who have been sensual, have become temperate; yea, and haters of religion, to be professors of it. All these things, and many more of the like nature, have proceeded from a change wrought upon the affections only; whilst the mind, will, and conscience, have been totally unsanctified.

By this change, where it is alone, no man ever became spiritually minded. For whereas there are two parts of the depravation of our affections, that whereby they are turned off from God, and that whereby they inordinately cleave unto other things: their change principally, if not only, respects the latter. They are brought into some order with respect unto present things. The mind is not continually tossed up and down by them, as the waves of the sea, that are troubled, and cast up mire and dirt. They do not carry those in whom they are into vicious sensual actions, but they allow them to make virtue in moderation, sobriety, temperance, fidelity, and usefulness in several ways, to be their design. And it is admirable to think what degrees of eminency in all sorts of moral virtues upon this one principle of moderating the affections, even many among the heathens attained unto. But as unto their aversation

from God and spiritual things, in the true spiritual notion of them, they are not cured by this change: at least, this change may be, and yet this latter not be wrought.

Again, This alteration doth but turn the course or stream of men's affections, it doth not change the nature of them. They are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were, only they are habituated unto another course than what of themselves they are inclined unto. You may take a young whelp of the most fierce and savage creatures, as of a tiger, or a wolf, and by custom or usage make it as tame and harmless as any domestic creature; a dog, or the like. But although it may be turned unto quite another way or course of acting than what it was of itself inclined unto, yet its nature is not changed: and therefore, frequently on occasion, opportunity, or provocation, it will fall into its own savage inclination; and having tasted of the blood of creatures, it will never be reclaimed. So is it with the depraved affections of men, with respect unto their change; their streams are turned, they are habituated unto a new course, their nature is not altered, at least not from rational unto spiritual, from earthly unto heavenly. Yet this is that which was most beautiful and desirable in nature, the glory of it, and the utmost of its attainments. He who has by any means proceeded unto such a moderation of his affections, as to render him kind, benign, patient, useful, preferring public good before private, ordinate, and temperate in all things, will rise up in judgment against those, who, professing themselves to be under the conduct of the light of grace, do yet, by being morose, angry, selfish, worldly, manifest that their affections are not subdued by the power of that grace. Wherefore, that we may be spiritually minded, there is yet another work upon our affections required, which is their internal renovation, whereby not only the course of their actings is changed, but their nature is altered, and spiritually renewed. I intend that which is expressed in that great evangelical promise; Isa. xi. 6—9. 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking

child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.' A change and alteration is promised in the natures, principles, and first inclinations of the worst and most savage sinners, who pass under the power of gospel grace.

This is that which is required of us in a way of duty; Eph. iv. 13. 'And be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds.' There is a renovation of the mind itself, by the communication of spiritual saving light and understanding thereunto, whereof I have treated elsewhere at large; see Rom. xii. 2. Ephes. i. 17, 18. But the spirit of the mind, that whereby it is enlivened, lead and disposed unto its actings, that is to be renewed also. The spirit of the mind is in this place opposed unto the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lust, or depraved affections; ver. 22. These therefore are that spirit of the mind which incline, bend, and lead it to act suitably unto its inclinations, which is to be renewed. And when our affections are inclined by the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, then are they renewed, and not else. No other change will give them a spiritual renovation. Hereby those things which are only natural affections in themselves, in them that believe, become fruits of the Spirit; Gal. v. 22. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,' &c. They continue the same as they were in their essence, substance, and natural powers, but are changed in their properties, qualities, inclinations, whenever a new nature is given unto them. So the waters at Marah were the same waters still, before and after their cure. But of themselves, and in their own nature, they were bitter, so as that the people could not drink them; in the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and useful; Exod. xv. 25, 26. So was it with the waters of Jericho, which were cured by casting salt into them; 2 Kings xix. 20, 21. Our affections continue the same as they were on their nature and essence, but they are so cured by grace, as that their properties, qualities, and inclinations, are all cleansed or renewed. The tree or salt that is cast into these waters whereby the cure is wrought, is the love of God above all, proceeding from faith in him by Christ Jesus.

CHAP. XIII.

The work of the renovation of our affections. How differenced from any other impression on, or change wrought in, them, and how it is evidenced so to be. The first instance in the universality accompanying of affections spiritually renewed. The order of the exercise of our affections with respect unto their objects.

THAT which is our concernment herein, is to inquire of what nature that work is which hath been on our own affections, or in them, and how it differs from those, which, whatever they do or effect, yet will not render us nor themselves spiritual.

And we ought to use the best of our diligence herein; because the great means whereby multitudes delude and deceive their own souls, persuading themselves that there has been an effectual work of the grace of the gospel in them, is the change that they find in their affections, which may be, on many occasions, without any spiritual renovation.

1. As unto the temporary and occasional impressions in the affections before mentioned, whether from the word, or any other divine warning by afflictions or mercies, they are common unto all sorts of persons. Some there are, whose 'consciences are seared with a hot iron;' 1 Tim. iv. 2. 'who' thereon 'being past feeling' (senseless of all calls, warnings, and rebukes), 'do give themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;' Ephes. iv. 19. Such persons having hardened themselves in a long course of sin, and being given up unto a reprobate mind, or vile affections in a way of judgment, have, it may be, no such impressions on their affections, on any occasion, as to move them with a sense of things spiritual and eternal. They may be terrified with danger, sudden judgments, and other revelations of the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness of men; but they are not drawn to take shelter in thoughts of spiritual things. Nothing but hell will awaken them unto a due consideration of themselves and things eternal.

It is otherwise with the generality of men who are not profligate and impudent in sinning. For although they are

in a natural condition, and a course of sin, in the neglect of known duties, yet by one means or other, most frequently by the preaching of the word, their affections are stirred towards heavenly things.

Sometimes they are afraid, sometimes they have hopes and desires about them. These put them on resolutions, and some temporary endeavours to change their lives, to abstain from sin, and to perform holy duties. But as the prophet complains, 'their goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew, so passeth it away.' Yet by means hereof do many poor ignorant souls deceive themselves, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. And they will sometimes so express how they are affected with complaints of themselves as unto their long neglect of spiritual things, that others may entertain good hopes concerning them; but all comes to nothing in the trial.

There is no difficulty unto spiritual light, to distinguish between these occasional impressions on the affections, and that spiritual renovation of them which we inquire after. This alone is sufficient to do it, that they are all of them temporary and evanid. 'They abide for awhile only,' as our Saviour speaks, and every occasion defeats all their efficacy. They may be frequently renewed, but they never abide. Some of them immediately pass away, and are utterly lost between the place where they hear the word and their own habitations; and in vain shall they inquire after them again, they are gone for ever. Some have a larger continuance, endure longer in the mind, and produce some outward effects; none of them will hold any trial, or shock of temptation.

Yet I have somewhat to say unto those who have such impressions on their affections, and warning by them.

1. Despise them not, for God is in them. Although he may not be in them in a way of saving grace, yet he is in them in that which may be preparatory thereto. They are not common human accidents, but especial divine warnings.

2. Labour to retain them, or a sense of them, upon your hearts and consciences. You have got nothing by losing so many of them already. And if you proceed in their neglect, after awhile you will hear of them no more.

3. Put no more in the mthan belongs unto them. Do not presently conclude that your state is good, because you have been affected at the hearing of the word, or under a sickness, or in a danger. Hereon you may think that now all is well with them, wherewith they please themselves, until they are wholly immersed in their former security.

2. We may consider the difference that is between the habitual change of the affections before described, and that renovation by grace which renders them spiritual. And this is of great concernment unto us all to inquire into it with diligence. Multitudes are herein deceived, and that unto their ruin. For they resolve their present peace into, and build their hopes of eternal life on, such a change in themselves, as will not abide the trial. This difference, therefore, is to be examined by Scripture light, and the experience of them that do believe. And,

1. There is a double universality with respect unto the spiritual renovation of our affections.

1. That which is subjective with respect unto the affections themselves; and,

2. That which is objective with respect unto spiritual things.

1. Sanctification extends itself unto the whole spirit, soul, and body; 1 Thess. v. 23. When we say that we are sanctified in part only, we do not say that any part, power, or faculty of the soul is unsanctified, but only that the work is not absolutely perfect in any of them. All sin may retain power in some one affection, as anger, fear, or love, as unto actual irruptions and effects, more than in all the rest. As one affection may be more eminently sanctified in some than in others. For it may have advantages unto this end from men's natural tempers, and various outward circumstances. Hence some find little difficulty in the mortification of all other lusts or corruptions, in comparison of what they meet withal in some one inordinate affection or corruption. This, it may be, David had regard unto; Psal. xviii. 23. I have known persons shining exemplarily in all other graces, who have been scarce free from giving great scandal by the excess of their passions, and easy provocations thereunto. And yet they have known that the setting themselves unto the sincere vigorous mortification of that disorder, is the most

eminent pledge of their sincerity in other things. For the trial of our self-denial lies in the things that our natural inclinations lie strongest toward. Howbeit, as was said, there is no affection where there is this work of renovation, but it is sanctified and renewed; none of them is left absolutely unto the service of sin and Satan. And therefore, whereas by reason of the advantages mentioned, sin doth greatly contend to use some of them unto its interest and service in a peculiar manner, yet are they enabled unto, and made meet for, gracious actings, and do, in their proper seasons, put forth themselves accordingly. There is no affection of the mind from whence the soul and conscience hath received the greatest damage, that was, as it were, the field wherein the contest is managed between sin and grace, but hath its spiritual use and exercise, when the mind is renewed.

There are some so inordinately subject to anger and passion therein, as if they were absolutely under the power and dominion of it; yet do they also know how to be angry, and sin not in being angry at sin in themselves and others. 'Yea, what indignation; yea, what revenge;' 2 Cor. vii. 7. Yea, God is pleased sometimes to leave somewhat more than ordinary of the power of corruption in one affection, that it may be an occasion of the continual exercise of grace in the other affections. Yet are they all sanctified in their degree, that which is relieved, as well as that which doth relieve. And therefore as the remainder of sin in them that believe is called the old man, which is to be crucified in all the members of it, because of its adherence unto the whole person in all its powers and faculties; so the grace implanted in our natures, is called the new man, there being nothing in us that is not seasoned and affected with it. As nothing in our natures escaped the taint of sin, so nothing in our natures is excepted from the renovation that is by grace. He in whom any one affection is utterly unrenewed, hath no one graciously renewed in him. Let men take heed how they indulge to any depraved affection, for it will be an unavoidable impeachment of their sincerity. Think not to say with Naaman, God be merciful unto me in this thing, in all others I will be for him.

He requires the whole heart, and will have it or none.

The chief work of a Christian is to make all his affections in all their operations subservient unto the life of God; Rom. vi. 17. And he who is wise will keep a continual watch over those wherein he finds the greatest reluctancy thereunto. And every affection is originally sanctified according unto the use it is to be of, in the life of holiness and obedience.

To be entire for God, to follow him wholly, to cleave unto him with purpose of heart, to have the heart circumcised to love him, is to have all our affections renewed and sanctified, without which we can do none of them. When it is otherwise, there is a double heart, a heart, and a heart which he abhors. 'Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty;' Hosea x. 2.

So it is in the other change mentioned. Whatever is or may be wrought upon our affections when they are not spiritually renewed, that very change, as unto the degree of it, is not universal; it doth not affect the whole mind in all its powers and affections, until a vital prevailing principle and habit of grace is implanted in the soul. Sin will not only radically adhere unto all the faculties, powers, and affections, but it will, under any change that may befall them, refer the rule and dominion in some of them unto itself. So was it with the young man that came unto our Lord Jesus Christ to know what he should do to obtain eternal life; Mark x. 17—22.

Thus there are many, who in other things are reduced unto moderation, sobriety, and temperance; yet there remaineth in them the love of money in a predominant degree, which to them 'is the root of all evil,' as the apostle speaks: some seem to be religious, but they bridle not their tongues, through anger, envy, hatred, and the like; their religion is in vain.

The most of men, in their several ways of profession, pretend not only unto religion, but unto zeal in it, yet set no bounds unto their affections unto earthly enjoyments. Some of old, who had most eminently in all other things subdued their passions and affections, were the greatest enemies unto, and persecutors of, the gospel.

Some who seem to have had a mighty change wrought in them by a superstitious devotion, do yet walk in the spirit of Cain towards all the disciples of Christ, as it is with the

principal devotionists of the church of Rome; and elsewhere we may see some go soberly about the persecution and destruction of other Christians. Some will cherish one secret lust or other, which they cannot but know to be pernicious unto their souls. Some love the praise of men, which will never permit them to be truly spiritually minded: so our Saviour testifieth of some, that they could 'not believe, because they loved the praise of men.' This was the known vice of all the ancient philosophers. They had many of them, on the principles of reason and by severe exercise, subdued their affections unto great moderation about temporary things; but, in the mean time, were all of them slaves to vain glory and the praise of men, until by the public observation of it, and some contradictions in their lives unto their pretences unto virtue, they lost that also among wise and considerative men. And generally, if men, not spiritually renewed, were able to search themselves, they would find that some of their affections are so far from having any change wrought in them, as that they are a quiet habitation for sin, where it exerciseth its rule and dominion.

2. There is a universality that is objective in spiritual things, with respect unto the renovation of our affections; that is, affections, spiritually renewed, do fix themselves upon, and cleave unto, all spiritual things in their proper places, and unto their proper ends. For the ground and reason of our adherence unto any one of them, are the same with respect unto them all. That is their relation unto God in Christ. Wherefore when our affections are renewed, we make no choice in spiritual things, cleaving unto some and refusing others, making use of Naaman's restraint; but our adherence is the same unto them all in their proper places and degrees. And if, by reason of darkness and ignorance, we know not any of them to be from God, as for instance, the observation of the Lord's day, it is of unspeakable disadvantage unto us. An equal respect is required in us unto all God's commands. Yet there are various distinctions in spiritual things. And thereon a man may, and ought to, value one above another, as unto the degrees of *his* love and esteem, although they are to be sincere with *respect* unto them all.

1. God himself, that is, as revealed in and by Christ, is, in the first and chiefest place, the proper and adequate object of our affections, as they are renewed. He is so for himself, or his own sake alone. This is the spring, the centre, and chief object of our love. He that loves not God for himself, that is, for what he is in himself, and what from himself alone he is, and will be, unto us in Christ, which considerations are inseparable, he hath no true affection for any spiritual thing whatever. And not a few do here deceive themselves, or are deceived, which should make us the more diligent in the examination of ourselves. They suppose that they love heaven and heavenly things, and the duties of divine worship, which persuasion may befall them on many grounds and occasions, which will not endure the trial. But as unto God himself, they can give no evidence that they have any love to him, either on the account of the glorious excellencies of his nature, with their natural relation unto him and dependance on him, nor on the account of the manifestation of himself in Christ, and the exercise of his grace therein. But whatever may be pretended, there is no love unto God, whereof these things are not the formal reason, that proceeds not from these springs. And because that all men pretend that they love God, and defy them that think them so vile as not to do so, though they live in open enmity against him and hatred of him, it becomes us strictly to examine ourselves on what grounds we pretend so to do. Is it because indeed we see an excellency, a beauty, a desirableness, in the glorious properties of his nature, such as our souls are refreshed and satisfied with the thoughts of by faith, and in whose enjoyment our blessedness will consist, so that we always rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness; is it our great joy and satisfaction that God is what he is; is it from the glorious manifestation that he hath made of himself and all his holy excellencies in Christ, with the communication of himself unto us in and by him? If it be so indeed, then is our love generous and gracious, from the renovation of our affections. But if we say we love God, yet truly know not why, or upon principles of education, and because it is esteemed the height of wickedness to do otherwise, we shall be at a loss when we are called unto our trial. This is the first object of our affections.

2. In other spiritual things, renewed affections do cleave unto them according as God is in them. God alone is loved for himself; all other things for him, in the measure and degree of his presence in them. This alone gives them pre-eminence in renewed affections; for instance, God is in Christ, in the human nature of the man Christ Jesus, in a way and manner singular, in concern alike, incomprehensible; so as he is in the same kind in nothing else. Therefore is the Lord Christ, even as unto his human nature, the object of our affections in such a way and degree, as no other thing, spiritual or eternal, but God himself, is or ought to be; all other spiritual things become so from the presence of God in them, and from the degree of that presence have they their nature and use. Accordingly are they, or ought to be, the object of our affections as unto the degree of their exercise. Evidence of the presence of God in things and persons are the only attractives of renewed affections.

3. In those things which seem to stand in an equality as unto what is of God in them, yet on some especial occasions and reasons, our love may go forth eminently unto one more than another. Some particular truth, with the grace communicated by it, may have been the means of our conversion unto God, of our edification in an especial manner, of our consolation in distress; it cannot be, but that the mind will have a peculiar respect unto, and valuation of, such truths, and the grace administered by them. And so it is as unto duties. We may have found such a lively intercourse and communication with God in some of them, as may give us a peculiar delight in them.

But notwithstanding these differences, affections spiritually renewed do cleave unto all spiritual things as such. For the true formal reason of their so doing, is the same in them all, namely, God in them; only they have several ways of acting themselves towards them, whereof I shall give one instance.

Our Saviour distributes spiritual things into those that are heavenly, and those that are earthly, that is comparatively so; John iii. 12. 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?'

The heavenly things are the deep and mysterious counsels of the will of God. These renewed affections cleave unto with holy admiration and satisfactory submission, captivating the understanding unto what it cannot comprehend. So the apostle declares it, Rom. xi. 33—36. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.' What the mind cannot comprehend, the heart doth admire and adore, delighting in God, and giving glory unto him in all.

The earthly things intended by our Saviour in that place, is the work of God upon the souls of men in their regeneration, wrought here in the earth. Toward these the affections act themselves with delight, and with great thanksgiving. The experience of the grace of God in and upon believers is sweet unto their souls. But one way or other they cleave unto them all; they have not a prevailing aversation unto any of them. They have a regard unto all God's precepts, a delight in all his counsels, a love to himself and all his ways.

Whatever other change is wrought on the affections, if they be not spiritually renewed, it is not so with them. For as they do not cleave unto any spiritual things, in their own true proper nature, in a due manner because of the evidences of the presence of God in them, so there are always some of them, whereunto those whose affections are not renewed, do maintain an aversation and an enmity. And although this frame doth not instantly discover itself, yet it will do so upon any especial trial. So was it with the hearers of our Saviour; John vi. There was a great impression made on their affections, by what he taught them concerning 'the bread of God,' that came down from heaven, and gave life unto the world. For they cried thereon, 'Lord, evermore give us of this bread;' ver. 34. But when the mystery of it was farther explained unto them, they liked it not, but cried, 'This is a hard saying, who can bear it?' ver. 60. and thereon fell off both from him and his doctrine, although

they had followed him so long as to be esteemed his disciples; ver. 66.

I say, therefore, whensoever men's affections are not renewed, whatever other change may have been wrought upon them, as they have no true delight in any spiritual things, or truths, for themselves and in their own nature, so there are some instances wherein they will maintain their natural enmity and aversation unto them. This is the first difference between affections spiritually renewed, and those which from any other causes may have some kind of change wrought in them.

CHAP. XIV.

The second difference between affections spiritually renewed and those who have been only changed by light and conviction. Grounds and reasons of men's delight in duties of divine worship, and of their diligence in their performance whose minds are not spiritually minded.

The second difference lieth herein, That there may be a change in the affections, wherein men may have delight in the duties of religious worship, and diligence in their observance; but it is the spiritual renovation of the affections that gives delight in God through Christ, in any duty of religious worship whatever.

Where the truth of the gospel is known and publicly professed, there is great variety in the minds, ways, and practices of men about the duties of religious worship. Many are profane in their minds and lives, who, practically at least, despise, or wholly neglect the observance of them. These are stout hearted, and far from righteousness; Tit. i. 16. Some attend unto them formally and cursorily, from the principles of their education, and, it may be, out of some convictions they have of their necessity. But many there are who, in the way they choose and are pleased withal, are diligent in their observance, and that with great delight, who yet give no evidence of the spiritual renovation of their minds. Yea, the way whereby some express their devotion in them, being superstitious and idolatrous, is inconsistent with that or any other saving grace. This, therefore, we

must diligently inquire into, or search into the grounds and reasons of men's delight in divine worship, according unto their convictions of the way of it, and yet continue in their minds altogether unrenewed. And,

1. Men may be greatly affected with the outward part of divine worship, and the manner of the performance thereof, who have no delight in what is internal, real, and spiritual therein; John v. 35. 'He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in this light.' So many were delighted in the preaching of Ezekiel, because of his eloquence and elegancy of his parables; chap. xxxiii. 31, 32. This gave them both delight and diligence in hearing, whereon they call themselves the people of God, though they continued to live in sin; their hearts went after covetousness. The same may befall many at present, with reference unto the spiritual gifts of those by whom the word of God is dispensed. I deny not but that men may be more delighted, more satisfied with the gifts, the preaching, of one than another, and yet be sincere in their delight in the dispensation of the word; for they may find more spiritual advantage thereby, than in the gifts of others, and things so prepared as to be suited unto their edification more than elsewhere. But that which at present we insist on, hath respect only unto some outward circumstances pleasing the minds of men; 2 Tim. 2—4.

This was principally evident under the Old Testament, whilst they had carnal ordinances and a worldly sanctuary. Ofttimes under that dispensation the people were given up unto all sorts of idolatry and superstition. And when they were not so, yet were the body of them carnal and unholy, as is evident from the whole tract of God's dealing with them by his prophets, and in his providences. Yet had they great delight in the outward solemnities of their worship, placing all their trust of acceptance with God therein. They who did really and truly believe, looked through them all unto Christ, whom they did foresignify; without which, the things were a yoke unto them, and a burden almost insupportable; Acts xv. But those who were carnal delighted in the things themselves, and for their sakes rejected him who was the life and substance of them all. And this proved the great means of the apostacy of the Christian church also.

For to maintain some appearance of spiritual affections, men introduced carnal incitations of them into evangelical worship; such as singing with music and pompous ceremonies. For they find such things needful to reconcile the worship of God unto their minds and affections, and through them they appear to have great delight therein. Could some men but in their thoughts separate divine service from that outward order, those methods of variety, show, and melody, wherewith they are affected, they would have no delight in it, but look upon it as a thing that must be endured. How can it be otherwise conceived of among the Papists? they will with much earnestness, many evidences of devotion, sometimes with difficulty and danger, repair unto their solemn worship, and when they are present, understand not one word whereby their minds might be excited unto the real actings of faith, love, and delight in God. Only order, ceremony, music, and other incentives of carnal affections, make great impression on them. Affections spiritually renewed are not concerned in those things. Yea, if those in whom they are should be engaged in the use of them, they would find them means of diverting their minds from the proper work of divine worship, rather than an advantage therein. It will also appear so unto themselves, unless they are content to lose their spiritual affections, acting themselves in faith and love, embracing in their stead a carnal imaginary devotion. Hence, two persons may at the same time attend unto the same ordinances of divine worship with equal delight, on very distinct principles; as if two men should come into the same garden planted and adorned with a variety of herbs and flowers, one ignorant of the nature of them, the other a skilful herbalist. Both may be equally delighted; the one with the colours and smell of the flowers, the other with the consideration of their various natures, their uses in physical remedies, or the like. So may it be in the hearing of the word. For instance, one may be delighted with the outward administration, another with its spiritual efficacy, at the same time. Hence Austin tells us, that singing in the church was laid aside by Athanasius at Alexandria; not the people's singing of psalms, but a kind of singing in the reading of the Scripture and some offices of worship, which began then to be introduced in the church. And the reason

he gave why he did it was, that the modulation of the voice and musical tune might not divert the minds of men from that spiritual affection which is required of them in sacred duties. What there is of real order in the worship of God, as there is that order which is an effect of divine wisdom, it is suited and useful unto spiritual affections, because proceeding from the same Spirit whereby they are internally renewed: 'Beholding your order;' Col. ii. 5. Every thing of God's appointment is both helpful and delightful unto them. None can say with higher raptures of admiration, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord!' Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2. than they whose affections are renewed. Yet is not their delight terminated on them, as we shall see immediately.

2. Men may be delighted in the performance of outward duties of divine worship, because in them they comply with, and give some kind of satisfaction unto, their convictions. When conscience is awakened unto a sense of the necessities of such duties, namely, of those wherein divine worship doth consist, it will give the mind no rest or peace in the neglect of them. Let them be attended unto in the seasons which light, conviction, and custom call for; it will be so far satisfied as that the mind shall find present ease and refreshment in it. And when the soul is wonted unto this relief, it will not only be diligent in the performance of such duties, it will not only not omit them, but it will delight in them, as those which bring them in great advantage. Hence many will not omit the duty of prayer every morning, who upon the matter are resolved to live in sin all the day long. And there are but few who sedulously endeavour to live and walk in the frame of their hearts and ways answerable unto their own prayers; yet all that is in our prayers, beyond our endeavours to answer it in a conformity of heart and life, is but the exercise of gifts in answer to convictions. Others find an allay of troubles in them, like that which sick persons may find by drinking cold water in a fever, whose flames are assuaged for a season by it. They make them as an antidote against the poison and sting of sin, which allayeth its rage, but cannot expel its venom.

Or these duties are unto them like the sacrifices for sin under the law. They gave a guilty person present ease. But,

as the apostle speaks, they made not men perfect. They took not away utterly a conscience condemning for sin. Presently, on the first omission of duty, a sense of sin again returned on them, and that not only as the fact, but as the person himself was condemned by the law. Then were the sacrifices to be repeated for a renewed propitiation. This gave that carnal people such delight and satisfaction in those sacrifices, that they trusted unto them for righteousness, life, and salvation. So it is with persons who are constant in spiritual duties merely from conviction. The performance of those duties gives them a present relief and ease; though it heal not their wound, it assuageth their pain, and dispelleth their present fears. Hence are they frequent in them, and that ofttimes not without delight, because they find ease thereby. And their condition is somewhat dangerous, who upon the sense of the guilt of any sin, do betake themselves for relief unto their prayers; which having discharged, they are much at ease in their minds and consciences, although they have obtained no real sense of the pardon of sin, nor any strength against it.

It will be said, Do not all men, the best of men, perform all spiritual duties out of a conviction of their necessity? do not they know it would be their sin to omit them, and so find satisfaction in their minds upon their performance? I say they do: but it is one thing to perform a duty out of conviction of a necessity, as it is God's ordinance, which conviction respects only the duty itself; another thing to perform it to give satisfaction unto convictions of other sins, or to quiet conscience under its trouble about them, which latter we speak unto. This begins and ends in self; self-satisfaction is the sole design of it. By it men aim at some rest and quietness in their own minds, which otherwise they cannot attain. But in the performance of duties in faith, from a conviction of their necessity as God's ordinance, and their use in the way of his grace, the soul begins and ends in God. It seeks no satisfaction in them, nor finds it from them, but in and from God alone by them.

3. The principal reason why men whose affections are only changed, not spiritually renewed, do delight in holy *duties* of divine worship, is, because they place their righ-

teousness before God in them, whereon they hope to be accepted with him. They know not, they seek not, after any other righteousness but what is of their own working out. Whatever notions they may have of the righteousness of faith, of the righteousness of Christ, that which they practically trust unto, is their own; and it discovers itself so to be in their own consciences on every trial that befals them. Yea, when they cry unto the Lord, and pretend unto faith in Christ, they quickly make it evident that their principal trust is resolved into themselves. Now in all that they can plead in a way of duties or obedience, nothing carrieth a fairer pretence unto a righteousness, than what they do in the worship of God, and the exercise of the acts of religion towards him. This is that which he expects at their hands, what is due unto him, in the light of their consciences; the best that they can do to please him, which therefore they must put their trust in or nothing. They secretly suppose not only that there is a righteousness in these things which will answer for itself, but such also as will make compensation, in some measure, for their sins; and therefore, whereas they cannot but frequently fall into sin, they relieve themselves from the reflection of their consciences by a multiplication of duties, and renewed diligence in them.

It is inconceivable what delight and satisfaction men will take in any thing that seems to contribute so much unto a righteousness of their own. For it is suitable unto, and pleaseth all the principles of nature as corrupt, after it is brought under the power of a conviction concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

This made the Jews of old so pertinaciously adhere unto the ceremonies and sacrifices of the law, and to prefer them above the gospel, the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof; Rom. x. 3, 4. They looked and sought for righteousness by them. Those who for many generations were kept up with great difficulty unto any tolerable observance of them, when they had learned to place all their hopes of a righteousness in them, would, and did, adhere unto them, unto their temporal and eternal ruin; Rom. ix. 31—33. And when men were persuaded that righteousness was to be attained by works of munificence and supposed charity, in the dedication of their substance unto the use of the church,

they who otherwise were covetous, and greedy, and oppressing, would lavish gold out of the bag, and give up their whole patrimony, with all their ill-gotten goods, to attain it; so powerful an influence hath the desire of self-righteousness upon the minds of men. It is the best fortification of the soul against Christ and the gospel, the last reserve whereby it maintains the interest of self against the grace of God.

Hence, I say, those that place their righteousness, or that which is the principal part of it, in the duties of religious worship, will not only be diligent in them, but ofttimes abound in a multiplication of them. Especially will they do so, if they may be performed in such a way and manner, as pleaseth their affections with a show of humility and devotion, requiring nothing of the exercise of faith, or sincere divine love therein. So is it with many in all kinds of religion, whether the way of their worship be true or false, whether it be appointed of God, or rejected by him. And the declaration hereof is the subject of the discourse of the prophe ; Isa. i. 11 19. Also, Micah vi. 7, 8.

4. The reputation of devotion in religious duties, may insensibly affect the unrenewed minds of men with great diligence and delight in their performance. However men are divided in their apprehension and practice about religion; however different from, and contrary unto, each other, their ways of divine worship are; yet it is amongst all sorts of men, yea, in the secret thoughts of them who outwardly contemn these things, a matter of reputation to be devout, to be diligent, to be strict in and about those duties of religion, which, according to their own light and persuasion, they judge incumbent on them. This greatly affects the minds of men, whilst pride is secretly predominant in them; and they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Especially will this consideration prevail on them, when they suppose that the credit and honour of the way which they profess, in competition with others, depends much on their reputation, as to their strictness, in duties of devotion. For then will they not only be diligent in themselves, but zealous in drawing others unto the same observances. These two principles, their own reputation, and that of their *sect*, constituted the life and soul of pharisaism of old.

According as the minds of men are influenced with these apprehensions, so will a love unto, and a delight in, those duties, whereby their reputation is attained, thrive and grow in them.

I am far from apprehending that any men are (at least I speak not of them who are) such vile hypocrites, as to do all that they do in religion to be seen and praised of men, being influenced in all public duties thereby, which some among the Pharisees were given up unto. But I speak of them who being under the convictions and motives before mentioned, do also yet give admittance unto this corrupt end of desire of reputation, or the praise of men. For every such end being admitted and prevalent in the mind, will universally influence the affections unto a delight in those duties, whereby that end may be attained, until the person with whom it is so be habituated unto them with great satisfaction.

5. I should, in the last place, insist on superstition. As this is an undue fear of the divine nature, will, and operations, built on false notions and apprehensions of them, it may befall the minds of men in all religions, true and false. It is an internal vice of the mind. As it respects the outward way and means of religious service, and consists in the devout performance of such duties as God indeed accepts not, but forbids; so it belongs only to religion as it is false and corrupt. How in both respects it will engage the minds of men into the performance of religious duties, and for the most part with the most scrupulous diligence, and sometimes with prodigious attempts to exceed the measures of human nature in what they do design, is too long a work here to be declared. It may suffice to have mentioned it among the causes and reasons why men, whose affections are not spiritually renewed, may yet greatly delight in the diligent performance of the outward duties of religion. Our design in these things is the discovery of the true nature of this grace and duty of being spiritually minded. Hereunto we have declared that it is necessary that our affections be spiritually and supernaturally renewed. And because there may be a great change wrought on the affections of men, with respect unto spiritual things, where there is nothing of this supernatural renovation; our present inquiry is, what

are the differences that are between the actings of the affections, of the one sort and of the other; whether spiritually renewed, or occasionally changed? And wherein the great exercise of them consists in the duties of religious worship, I have declared what are the grounds and reasons whence men of unrenewed minds do delight ofttimes in the duties of divine worship, and are diligent in the performance of them.

From these and the like considerations, it may be made manifest that the greatest part of the devotion that is in the world doth not spring from the spiritual renovation of the minds of men, without which it is not accepted with God. That which remains to give in instance, farther evidence unto the discovery we are in the pursuit of, is what are the grounds and reasons whereon those whose minds and affections are spiritually renewed, do delight in the institutions of divine worship; and attend unto their observance with great heed and diligence. And because this is an inquiry of great importance, and is of great use to be stated in other cases, as well as that before us, I shall treat of it by itself in the ensuing chapter, that the reader may the more distinctly comprehend it, both in the nature of the doctrine concerning it, and in the place it holds in our present discourse.

CHAP. XV.

Delight of believers in the holy institutions of divine worship. The grounds and reasons thereof. The evidence of being spiritually minded thereby, &c.

That all true believers whose minds are spiritually renewed have a singular delight in all the institutions and ordinances of divine worship is fully evident, both in the examples of the saints in the Scripture, and their own experience, which they will never forego. For this hath been the greatest cause of their suffering persecution; and martyrdom itself, in all ages. If the primitive Christians under the power of the pagan emperors, or the witnesses for Christ under the antichristian apostacy, would, or could have omitted the observance of them (according to the advice and practice of the

Gnostics), they might have escaped the rage of their adversaries. But they loved not their lives, in comparison unto that delight which they had in the observance of the commands of Christ, as unto the duties of evangelical worship. David gives us frequently an instance hereof in himself, Psal. xlii. 1—4. 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day.' Psal. lxiii. 1—5. 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in thy sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' Psal. lxxxiv. 1—4. 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.'

But a 'greater than David is here.' Our Lord Jesus Christ himself did upon all occasions declare his delight in, and zeal, for all the ordinances of divine worship, which was then in force by virtue of divine institution and command. For although he severely reproved and rejected whatever men had added thereunto under the pretence of a supererogating strictness or outward order, laying it all under that dreadful sentence, 'Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up,' and so cast into the fire; yet as unto what was of divine appointment, his delight therein was singular, and exemplary unto all his du-

ciples. With respect hereunto was it said of him, 'that the zeal of God's house had eaten him up,' by reason of the affliction which he had in his Spirit, to see the worship of it neglected, polluted, and despised. This caused him to cleanse the temple, the seat of divine worship, from the pollutors and pollutions of it, not long before his sufferings, in the face and unto the high provocation of all his adversaries. So with earnest desire he longed for the celebration of his last passover. Luke xxii. 15. 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.' And it is a sufficient evidence of the frame of spirit and practice of his disciples afterward, in reference to the duties of evangelical worship by his appointment, that the apostle gives it as an assured token of an unsound condition, and that which tendeth to final cursed apostacy, when any fall into a neglect of them; Heb. x. 25—27.

These things are manifest and unquestionable. But our present inquiry is only, what it is which believers do so delight in, in the ordinances and institutions of divine gospel worship, and what it is that engageth their hearts and minds into a diligent observance of them; as also how and wherein they do exercise their love and delight. And I say, in general, that their delight in all ordinances of divine worship, as is evident in the testimonies before produced, is in Christ himself, or God in Christ. This alone is that which they seek after, cleave unto, and are satisfied withal. They make use of the streams, but only as means of communication from the spring. When men are really renewed in the spirit of their minds, it is so. Their regard unto ordinances and duties of divine worship is, as they are appointed of God, a blessed means of communion and intercourse between himself in Christ, and their souls. By them doth Christ communicate of his love and grace unto us; in and by them do we act faith and love on him. It is the treasure hid in the field, which, when a 'man hath found, he purchaseth the whole field;' but it is that he may enjoy the treasure which is hid therein; Matt. xiii. 14. This field is the gospel, and all the ordinances of it. This men do purchase sometimes at a dear rate, even with the loss of all they enjoy. But yet, if they obtain nothing but the field, they will have little cause to rejoice in their bargain. It is Christ,

the treasure alone, that pearl of price, that will eternally enrich the soul. The field is to be used only, as to find and dig up the treasure that is in it. It is, I say, Christ alone that, in the preaching of the gospel, renewed affections do cleave unto as the treasure, and unto all other things, according as their relation is unto him, or they have a participation of him. Wherefore, in all duties of religion, in all ordinances of worship, their inquiry is after him whom their souls do love; Cant. i. 7.

But yet we must treat more particularly and distinctly of these things. Those whose affections are spiritually renewed, do love, adhere unto, and delight in ordinances of divine service, and duties of worship; on the grounds and reasons ensuing.

1. In general they do so, as they find faith, and love, and delight in God through Christ, excited and acted in and by them. This is their first and immediate end in their institution. It is a pernicious mistake to suppose that any external duties of worship, as hearing the word, prayer, or the sacraments, are appointed for themselves, or accepted for themselves.

Such thoughts the Jews of old had concerning their sacrifices; namely, that they were appointed for their own sakes, and were acceptable service unto God, merely on their own account. Wherefore God, to deliver them from this pernicious mistake, affirms ofttimes, that he never appointed them at all; that is, for any such end; Jer. vii. 22, 23. Isa. i. 12—14, &c. And now under the gospel, sundry things, destructive to the souls of men, have proceeded from such a supposition. Some hereon have always satisfied and contented themselves with the external observance of them, without desiring or endeavouring any holy communion with God in them, or by them. This constitutes the state and condition mentioned, Rev. iii. 1. And by following this tract, the generality of Christians do wander out of the way; they cannot leave them, nor do know how to use them unto their advantage, until they come wholly unto that woful state, Isa. xxix. 13. And some, to establish this deceit, have taught that there is much more in the outward work of these duties, than ever God put into them, and that they are sanctified merely by virtue of the work wrought.

But all the duties of the second commandment, as are all instituted ordinances of worship, are but means to express and exercise those of the first, as faith, love, fear, trust, and delight in God. The end of them all is, that through them, and by them, we may act those graces on God in Christ. Where this is not attended unto, when the souls of men do not apply themselves unto this exercise of grace in them, let them be never so solemn as to their outward performance, be attended unto with diligence, be performed with earnestness and delight, they are neither acceptable unto God, nor beneficial unto themselves; Isa. i. 11. This therefore is the first general spring of the love of believers, of them whose affections are spiritually renewed, unto the ordinances of divine worship, and their delight in them. They have experience that in and by them their faith and love are excited unto a gracious exercise of themselves on God in Christ. And when they find it otherwise with them, they can have no rest in their souls. For this end are they ordained, sanctified and blessed of God, and therefore are effectual means of it, when their efficacy is not defeated by unbelief.

And those who have no experience hereof in their attendance unto them, do, as hath been said, fall into pernicious extremes. Some continue their observance with little regard unto God, in cursed formality. So they make them a means of their ruin by countenancing of them in their security.

Others utterly reject them, at least the most solemn of them, and therein both the wisdom, and grace, and authority of, God by whom they are appointed: because through the power of their own unbelief they find nothing in them.

This being the immediate end of all divine institutions; this being the only way whereby we may give glory unto God in their observance, which is their ultimate end in this world; and this being the design in general of believers in that obedience they yield unto the Lord Christ in their diligent observation of them; we may consider how, in what way, and by what means, those whose affections are spiritually renewed, do and ought to apply their minds and souls unto their observance. And we may consider herein, first, what they do design; and then what they endeavour to be found in the exercise and practice of, in their use and enjoyment.

1. They come unto them with this desire, design, and

expectation, namely, to be enabled, directed, and excited by them, unto the exercise of divine faith and love. When it is not so with any, where there is not this design, they do in various degrees take the name of God in vain, in their observance. These are 'approximationes Dei,' the 'ways of drawing nigh unto God,' as they are every where called in Scripture. To suppose that a drawing nigh unto God may consist merely in the outward performance of duty, whatever be its solemnity, is to reject all due reverence of him. 'Forasmuch,' saith the Lord, 'as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their hearts far from me, therefore I will proceed against them;' Isa. xxix. 13. The mouth and lips are put, by a synecdoche, for all the means of outward worship and honour. These men may use, diligently attend unto, whilst their hearts are from God; that is, when they do not draw nigh to him by faith and love. But all this worship is rejected of God with the highest tokens of his displeasure and indignation against it.

1. Our souls then have no way of approach unto God in duties of worship, but by faith; no way of adherence or cleaving unto him, but by love; no way of abiding in him, but by fear, reverence, and delight. Whenever these are not in exercise, outward duties of worship are so far from being a means of such an approach unto him, as that they set us at a greater distance from him than we were before, at least are utterly useless and fruitless unto us. So indeed they are unto the most who come unto them they know not why, and behave themselves under them they care not how: nor is there any evil in the hearts and ways of men whereof God complaineth more in his word, as that which is accompanied with the highest contempt of him. And because these ordinances of divine worship are means which the wisdom and grace of God hath appointed unto this end, namely, the exercise and increase of divine faith and love, and therefore doth sanctify and bless them thereunto; I do not believe that they have any delight in the exercise of these graces, nor do design growth in them, by whom these great means of them are despised or neglected.

And although I have seen those valleys of public worship forsaken, either on pretences of higher attainments in faith,

light, and love, than to stand in need of them any more, or on a foolish opinion, that they cease upon the dispensation of the Spirit, which is given unto us to make them useful and effectual, or on some provocations that have been given unto some men, or which they have taken unto themselves, which they have thought they could revenge by a neglect of public administrations, or through slavish peace and negligence in times of difficulty, as is the manner of some, who forsake the assemblies of the saints; Heb. xvi. 25. yet, I never saw but it issued in a great decay, if not in an utter loss of all exercise of faith and love, and sometimes in open profaneness. For such persons contemn the way and means which God in his infinite wisdom and goodness hath appointed for their exercise and increase; and this shall not prosper. We may, therefore, do well to consider, that the principal way whereby we may sanctify the name of God, in all duties of his worship, and obtain the benefit of them to our own souls, is by a conscientious approach unto them with a holy desire and design to be found in the exercise of faith and love on God in Christ, and to be helped and guided therein by them.

To be under an efficacious influence from this design, is the best preparation for any duty. So David expresseth his delight in the worship of God. 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God;' Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2. He longed for the tabernacle, and the courts of it; but it was the enjoyment of God himself, the living God, that he desired and sought after. This was that which made him so fervent in his desires after those ordinances of God. So he expresseth it, Psal. lxiii. 2. 'To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' David had had great communion with, and delight in, God, by faith and love, in the solemn duties of his worship. And this was that which inflamed him with desires after renewed opportunities unto the same end.

2. This design is not general, inactive, useless, and slothful. But such persons diligently endeavour, in the use of these ordinances, and attendance unto them, to be found in the exercise of these graces. They have not only an antecedent design to be so, but a diligent actual endeavour after it, not suffering their minds by any thing to be diverted from

the pursuit of that design; Eccles. v. 1. Whatever is not quickened and enlivened hereby, they esteem utterly lost. Neither outward administrations, nor order, will give them satisfaction when these things are wanting in themselves. Without the internal actings of the life of faith, external administrations of ordinances of worship are but dead things. Nor can any believer obtain real satisfaction in them, or refreshment by them, without an inward experience of faith and love in them, and by them. And it is that which, if we are wise, we shall continually attend unto the consideration of. A watchful Christian will be careful lest he lose any one duty, by taking up the carcase of it. And the danger of so doing is not small. Our affections are renewed but in part. And as they are still liable to be diverted, and seduced from spirituality in duty, even by things earthly and carnal, through the corruption that remaineth in them; so there is a disposition abiding in them, to be pleased with those external things and religious duties, which others, as we have shewed before, who are no way graciously renewed, do satisfy themselves withal. The grace and oratory of the speaker in preaching of the word, especially in these days wherein the foppery of fine language, even in sacred things, is so much extolled; the order and circumstance of other duties, with inclination and love unto a party, are apt to insinuate themselves with great complacency into our affections, so far as they are unrenewed. And these things discover the true grounds whence it is that the ordinances of divine worship are so useless as they are to many who seem to attend unto them with diligence. They may be referred unto these three heads.

1. They do not come unto them, as the means appointed of God for the exercise of faith and love unto Christ, so as to make it their design in their approaches to them, without which, all that is spoken of advantage in and by other duties is utterly lost.

2. They do not in and under them labour to stir up faith and love unto their due exercise.

3. They suffer their minds to be diverted from the exercise of these graces, partly by occasional temptations, partly by attendance unto what is outward only in the ordinances themselves.

Spiritual affections find no place of rest in any of these things; such proposals of God in Christ, of his will, and their own duty, as may draw out their faith, love, godly fear, and delight into their due exercise, is that which they inquire after, and acquiesce in.

Two things alone doth faith regard in all duties of worship as unto the outward administration of it. The one absolutely, the other comparatively; both with respect unto the end mentioned, or the exercise, growth, and increase of grace in us. The first is, that they may be of divine appointment. Where their original and observance is resolved into divine authority, there and there alone will they have a divine efficacy. In all these things, faith hath regard to nothing but divine precepts and promises. Whatever hath regard to any thing else, is not faith, but fancy. And therefore these uncommanded duties in religion, which so abound in the papal church, as that if not the whole, yet all the principal parts of their worship consist in them, are such as in whose discharge it is impossible faith should be in a due exercise. That which it hath comparative respect unto, is the spiritual gifts of them unto whom the administration of the ordinances of the gospel, in the public worship of the church is committed. With respect unto them, believers may have more delight and satisfaction in the ministry of one than of another, as was touched before. But this is not because one is more learned than another, or more elegant than another, hath more ability of speech than another, or fervency in utterance than another, is more fervent or earnest in his delivery; but because they find the gifts of one more suited, and more effectual to stir up faith and love unto a holy exercise in their minds and hearts, than what they find in some others. Hence they have a peculiar value for, and delight in, the ministry of such persons, especially when they can enjoy it in due order, and without the offence of others. And ministers that are wise, will in holy administrations neglect all other things, and attend unto this alone, how they may be helpful unto the faith, and love, and joy of believers, so far as they are the object of their ministry.

This is the first reason and ground whereon affections spiritually renewed cleave unto ordinances of divine worship with delight and satisfaction; namely, because they are

the means appointed and blessed of God, for the exercise and increase of faith and love, with an experience of their efficacy unto that end.

The second is, because they are the means of the communication of a sense of divine love, and supplies of divine grace unto the souls of them that do believe. So far as our affections are renewed, this is the most principal attractive to cleave unto them with delight and complacency.

They are, as was observed before, the ways of our approaching unto God. Now we do not draw nigh to God, as himself speaks, as a 'dry hearth, or a barren wilderness,' where no refreshment is to be obtained. To make a pretence of coming unto God, and not with expectation of receiving good and great things from him, is to despise God himself, to overthrow the nature of the duty, and deprive our own souls of all benefit thereby: and want hereof, is that which renders the worship of the most, useless and fruitless unto themselves. We are always to come unto God, as unto an eternal spring of goodness, grace, and mercy, of all that our souls do stand in need of, of all we can desire in order unto our everlasting blessedness; and all these things, as unto believers, may be reduced unto the two heads before-mentioned.

1. They come for a communication of a sense of his love in Jesus Christ. Hence doth all our peace, consolation, and joy, all our encouragement to do, and suffer according to the will of God, all our supportments under our sufferings, solely depend; in these things do our souls live; and without them we are of all men the most miserable.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the immediate efficient cause of all these things in us. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts; Rom. v. 5. He witnesseth our adoption unto us; chap. viii. 15, 16. and thereby an interest in the love of the Father, in God, as he is love. But the outward way and means whereby he communicates these things unto us, and effects them in us, is by the dispensation of the gospel, or the preaching of it ordinarily. He doth the same work also in prayer, and ofttimes in other holy administrations. For this end, for a participation of this grace, of these mercies, do believers come unto God by them. They use them as means to draw 'water from the wells of salvation,' and to

receive in that spiritual sense of divine love, which God by them will communicate.

So Christ, by his word, knocks at the door of the heart; if it be open by faith, he cometh in and suppeth with men, giving them a gracious refreshment, by the testimony of his own love, and the love of the Father; Rev. iii. 20. John xiv. 23. This believers look for in, and this they do in various measures receive by the ordinances of divine worship. And although some, through their fears and temptations, are not sensible hereof, yet do they secretly receive these blessed gracious supplies whereby their souls are held in life, without which they would pine away and perish. So he dealeth with them; Cant. iv. 5, 6. These are the gardens and galleries of Christ wherein he gives us of his love; Cant. vii. 12. Those who are humble and sincere, know how often their souls have been refreshed in them, and how long sometimes the impressions they have received of divine grace and love have continued with them unto their unspeakable consolation. They remember what they have received in the opening and application of the 'exceeding great and precious promises,' that are given unto them, whereby they are gradually more and more made 'partakers of the divine nature;' how many a time they have received light in darkness, refreshment under despondencies, relief in their conflicts with dangers and temptations, in and by them. For this cause do affections that are spiritually renewed cleave unto them. Who can but love and delight in that which he hath found by experience to be the way and means of communicating unto him the most invaluable mercy, the most inestimable benefit, whereof in this life he can be made partaker? He who hath found a hidden treasure, although he should at once take away the whole of it, yet will esteem the place where he found it. But if it be of that nature, that no more can be found or taken of it at once, but what is sufficient for the present occasion, yet is so full and boundless, as that whenever he comes again to seek for it, he shall he sure to obtain present supply, he will always value it, and constantly apply himself unto it. And such is the treasure of grace and divine love, that is in the ordinances of divine worship.

If we are strangers unto these things, if we have never received efficacious intimations of divine love unto our

souls, in and by the duties of divine worship, we cannot love them and delight in them as we ought. What do men come to hear the word of God for? What do they pray for? What do they expect to receive from him? Do they come unto God as the eternal fountain of living waters? As the God of all grace, peace, and consolation? Or do they come unto his worship without any design, as unto a dry and empty show? Do they fight uncertainly with these things as men beating the air? Or do they think they bring something unto God, but receive nothing from him? that the best of their business is to please him in doing what he commands; but to receive any thing from him they expect not, nor do ever examine themselves whether they have done so or no? It is not for persons who walk in such ways, ever to attain a due delight in the ordinances of divine worship.

Believers have other designs herein; and among the rest, this in the first place, that they may be afresh made partakers of refreshing, comforting pledges of the love of God in Christ; and thereby of their adoption, of the pardon of their sins, and acceptance of their persons. According as they meet with these things in the duties of holy worship, public or private, so will they love, value, and adhere unto them. Some men are full of other thoughts and affections, so as that these things are not their principal design or desire, or are contented with that measure of them which they suppose themselves to have attained; or at least are not sensible of the need they stand in, to have fresh communications of them made unto their souls; supposing that they can do well enough without a renewed sense of divine love every day; some are so ignorant of what they ought to design, to look after, in the duties of gospel worship, as that it is impossible they should have any real design in them. Many of the better sort of professors are too negligent in this matter. They do not long and pant in the inward man after renewed pledges of the love of God; they do not consider how much need they have of them, that they may be encouraged and strengthened unto all other duties of obedience; they do not prepare their minds for their reception of them, nor come with expectation of their communication unto them; they do not rightly fix their faith on this truth, namely, that these holy administrations and duties are ap-

pointed of God in the first place, as the ways and means of conveying his love and a sense of it unto our souls. From hence springs all that luke-warmness, coldness, and indifferency in and unto the duties of holy worship, that are growing among us. For if men have lost the principal design of faith in them, and disesteem the chiefest benefit which is to be obtained by them, whence should zeal for them, delight in them, or diligence in attendance unto them, arise? Let not any please themselves under the power of such decays; they are indications of their inward frame, and those infallible. Such persons will grow cold, careless, and negligent, as unto the duties of public worship; they will put themselves neither to charge nor trouble about them; every occasion of life diverts them, and finds ready entertainment in their minds; and when they do attend upon them, it is with great indifference and unconcernedness. Yet would they have it thought, that all is still well within, as ever it was; they have as good a respect unto religion as any. But these things openly discover an ulcerous disease in the very souls of men, as evidently as if it were written on their foreheads; whatever they pretend unto the contrary, they are under the power of woful decays from all due regard unto spiritual and eternal things. And I would avoid the society of such persons, as those who carry an infectious disease about them, unless it were to help on their cure.

But herein it is that affections spiritually renewed do manifest themselves. When we do delight in, and value the duties of God's worship, because we find by experience that they are, and have been unto us, means of communicating a sense and renewed pledges of the love of God in Christ, with all the benefits and privileges which depend thereon; then are our affections renewed in and by the Holy Ghost.

2. They come for supplies of internal, sanctifying, strengthening grace. This is the second great design of believers in their approaches unto God in his worship. The want hereof as unto measures and degrees they find in themselves, and are sensible of it. Yea, therein lies the great burden of the souls of believers in this world. All that we do in the life of God, may be referred unto two heads.

1. The observance of all duties of obedience. And,

2. The conflict with, and conquest over, temptations.

About these things are we continually exercised. Hence the great thing which we desire, labour for, and pant after, is spiritual strength and ability for the discharge of ourselves in a due manner with respect unto these things. This is that which every true believer groaneth after in the inward man, and which he preferreth infinitely above all earthly things. So he may have grace sufficient in any competent measure for these ends, let what will befall him, he desireth no more in this world. God in Christ is the only fountain of all this grace. There is not one drachm of it to be obtained but from him alone. And as he doth communicate it unto us of his own sovereign goodness and pleasure, so the ordinary way and means whereby he will do it, are the duties of his worship; Isa. xl. 28—31. 'Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.'

All grace and spiritual strength is originally seated in the nature of God; ver. 28. But what relief can that afford unto us who are weak, feeble, fainting? He will act suitably unto his nature, in the communication of this grace and power; ver. 29. But how shall we have an interest in this grace, in these operations? wait on him in the ordinances of his worship, ver. 31. The word as preached is the food of our souls, whereby God administereth growth and strength unto them; John xvii. 17. 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. 'Desire,' says he, 'the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' But what encouragement have we thereunto; 'if so be,' saith he, 'ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' If in and by the dispensation of this word, you have had experience of the grace, the goodness, the kindness of God unto your souls, you cannot but desire it and delight in it: and otherwise, you will not do so. When men have sat some good while under the dispensation of the word, and in the enjoyment of other ordinances, without tasting in them, and by

them, that the Lord is gracious, they will grow weary of it and them. Wherefore, prayer is the way of his appointment for the application of our souls unto him, to obtain a participation of all needful grace, which therefore he has proposed unto us in the promises of the covenant, that we may know what to ask, and how to plead for it. In the Sacraments the same promises are sealed unto us, and the grace represented in them effectually exhibited. Meditation confirms our souls in the exercise of faith about it, and is the especial opening of the heart unto the reception of it. By these means, I say, doth God communicate all supplies of renewing, strengthening, and sanctifying grace unto us, that we may live unto him in all holy obedience, and be able to get the victory over our temptations. Under this apprehension do believers approach unto God in the ordinances of his worship. They come unto them as the means of God's communication unto their souls. Hence they cleave unto them with delight, so far as their affections are renewed. So the spouse testifieth of herself; 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight;' Cant. ii. 3. In these ordinances is the protecting, refreshing presence of Christ. This she rested in with great delight.

3. As they come unto them with these designs and expectations, so they have experience of the spiritual benefits and advantages which they receive by them, which more and more engageth them unto them in their affections and delights. All these things, those who have a change wrought in their affections, but not a spiritual renovation, are strangers unto. They neither have the design before mentioned in coming to them, nor the experience of this efficacy now proposed in their attendance on them. But these benefits are great; as for instance, when men find the worth and effect of the word preached on their souls in its enlightening, refreshing, strengthening, transforming power; when they find their hearts warmed, their graces excited and strengthened, the love of God improved, their desponding spirits under trials and temptations relieved, their whole souls gradually more and more conformed unto Christ; when they find themselves by it extricated out of snares, doubts, fears, temptations, and brought unto sanctification and rest; they cannot but delight in the dispensation of it, and rejoice in it

as the food of their souls. And it is a great hinderance unto the increase of spiritual life, and obstruction unto fruitfulness, thankfulness, and consolation, when we are negligent in our meditation about the benefits that we receive by the word, and the advantages which we have thereby. For whilst it is so with us, we can neither value the grace of God, in granting this inestimable privilege, nor perform any duty with respect unto it, in a right manner. This renders it an especial object of our affections as spiritually renewed. That secret love unto, and heavenly delight in, the statutes and testimonies of God, which David expresseth, Psal. cxix. arose from the spiritual benefit and advantage which he received by them, as he constantly declares. And the sole reason, on the other hand, why men grow so careless, negligent, and cold in their attendance unto the preaching of the word, is because they have no experience of any spiritual benefit, or advantage by it. They have been brought unto it by one means or another, mostly by conviction of their duty. Their minds have been variously affected with it, unto a joy in the hearing of it, and readiness unto sundry duties of obedience. But after awhile, when a sense of those temporary impressions is worn off, finding no real spiritual benefit by it, they lose all delight in it, and become very indifferent as unto its enjoyment. The frame which such persons at length arrive unto is described, Mal. i. 13. and iii. 14. none can give any greater evidence of the decay of all manner of grace in them, or of their being destitute of all saving grace, than when they apostatize from some degree of zeal for, and delight in, the dispensation of the word of God, with such a cursed indifferency, as many are overtaken withal. It cannot be otherwise. For seeing this is a way and means of the exercise of all grace, it will not be neglected, but where there is a decay of all grace; however men may please themselves with other pretences. And when they are thus insnared, every foolish prejudice, every provocation, every wanton opinion and imagination, will confirm them in, and increase, their gradual backsliding.

And as it is with believers, as unto the hearing of the word in general, so it is as unto the degrees of advantage which they find by it. When men have enjoyed the dispensation of the word in a peculiar manner, spiritual and effec-

tual, if they can be content to forego it for that which is more cold and lifeless, provided it possesseth the same time and outward form with the other, it is no great evidence that their souls do prosper. It is, therefore, those alone, who having a sense of the efficacy of the word on their souls and consciences unto all the holy ends of it, who cleave unto it with spiritual love and delight. They continually remember what holy impressions it hath made on them, what encouragements it hath brought their souls into, what encouragements unto faith and obedience it hath furnished them withal, and long after renewed sense of its enjoyments. When we do not find in ourselves this foundation of spiritual delight in the dispensation of the gospel, we can have no great evidence that our affections are renewed.

So also it is in the duties of prayer and meditation. When the soul of a believer hath had experience of the communion which it hath had of God in them, or either of them, of the spiritual refreshment which it hath had from them, of the benefits and mercies which are obtained by them in recovery from temptations, snares, despondencies, in victory over sin and Satan, in spiritual impressions, working it unto a holy watchful frame, which hath abode in it in other ways and occasions, with the like advantages wherewith fervent and effectual prayer and sincere heavenly meditation are accompanied, it cannot but have love unto them and delight in them; but if, indeed, we have no experience of these things, if we find not these advantages in and by these duties, they cannot but be a burden unto us, nor do serve unto any other end but to satisfy convictions. He who had the benefit of a serene and wholesome air in a recovery from many diseases and distempers, with the preservation of his health so obtained, will love it and prize it; and so will he these duties, who hath been partaker of any of these saving mercies and privileges wherewith they are accompanied. Some have been delivered from the worst of temptations, and the nearest approach of their prevalency (as to destroy themselves), by a sudden remembrance of the frame of their souls, and the intimations of God's love in such or such a prayer, at such a time. Some have had the same deliverance from temptations unto sin, when they have been carried away under the power of *their* corruptions, and all circumstances have concurred

under the apprehensions of it: a sudden thought of such a prayer or meditation, with the engagement they made of themselves therein unto God, hath caused all the weapons of sin to fall out of its hands, and all the beauties of its allurements to disappear.

When others have been under the power of such despondencies and disconsolations, as that no present tenders of relief can approach unto them, they have been suddenly raised and refreshed by the remembrance of the intimate love and kindness between Christ and their souls, that hath evidenced itself in former duties. Multitudes in fears, distresses, and temptations, have found relief unto their spirits, and encouragement unto their faith in the remembrance of the returns they have had unto former supplications in the like distresses. These are grounds of spiritual delight in these duties.

Heartless, lifeless, wordy prayer, the fruit of convictions and gifts, or of custom and outward occasions, however multiplied, and whatever devotion they seem to be accompanied withal, will never engage spiritual affections unto them. When these things are absent, when the soul hath not experience of them, prayer is but a lifeless form, a dead carcass, which it would be a torment unto a soul spiritually alive to be tied unto. There may be a season indeed, when God will seem to hide himself from believers in their prayers, so as they shall neither find that life in themselves which they have done formerly, nor be sensible of any gracious communications from him: but this is done only for a time, and principally to stir them up unto that fervency and perseverance in prayer, as may recover them into their former, or a better estate than yet they have attained unto. The like may be said concerning all other duties of religion, or ordinances of divine worship.

4. Believers, whose affections are spiritually renewed, do delight greatly in the duties of divine worship, because they are the great instituted way whereby they may give glory unto God. This is the first and principal end of all duties of religion as they respect divine appointment, namely, to ascribe and give unto God the glory that is his due. For in them all, acknowledgment is made of all the glorious excellencies of the divine nature, our dependance

on him, and relation unto him. And this is that which, in the first place, believers design in all the duties of divine worship. And the pattern set us by our blessed Saviour in the prayer he taught his disciples, directs us thereunto. All the first requests of it concern immediately the glory of God, and the advancement thereof: for therein also all the blessedness and safety of the church is included. Those who fail in this design, do err in all that they do; they never tend unto the mark proposed unto them. But this is that which principally animates the souls of them that believe in all their duties; this their universal relation unto him, and love in that relation, makes necessary. Wherefore that way and means whereby they may directly and solemnly ascribe and give glory unto God, is precious and delightful unto them. And such are all the duties of divine worship. These are some of the things wherein the respect of affections spiritually renewed, unto ordinances and duties of divine worship, doth differ from the actings of affections toward the same object which are not so sanctified and renewed.

There are yet other things accompanied with the same evidence of the difference between affections spiritually renewed, and those which have only a general change wrought in them, by convictions and some outward occasions, which must in one or two instances more be insisted on, with the consideration of such cases as derive from them. For my design herein, is not only to declare when our minds are spiritually renewed, but also what is the nature and operation of our affections, whereby we are constituted and denominated spiritually minded, which is the subject of our whole inquiry. Herein then we shall proceed.

CHAP. XVI.

Assimilation unto things heavenly and spiritual in affections spiritually renewed. This assimilation the work of faith: how, and whereby. Reasons of the want of growth in our spiritual affections as unto this assimilation.

When affections are spiritually renewed in their exercise, or fixing of themselves on spiritual things; there is an assimilation wrought in them, and in the whole soul unto those

spiritual and heavenly things by faith. But when there is a change in them only, from other causes and occasions, and not from renewing grace, there is an assimilation effected of spiritual and heavenly things unto themselves, unto those affections, by imagination.

This must somewhat at large be spoken unto, as that which gives the most eminent distinction between the frames of mind, whose difference we inquire into. And to that end we shall cast our consideration of it into the ensuing observations.

1. Affections spiritually renewed are in all their actings, in their whole exercise, under the guidance and conduct of faith. It is faith which, in its spiritual light, hath the leading of the soul in the whole life of God: we live here by faith, as we shall do hereafter by sight. If our affections deviate or decline in the least from the guidance of the faith, they degenerate from their spirituality, and give up themselves unto the service of superstition. Next unto corrupt secular interest in the management of crafty, selfish seducers, this hath been the great inlet of all superstition and false worship into the world. Blind affection groping in the dark after spiritual things, having not the saving light of faith to conduct them, have seduced the minds of men into all manner of superstitions, imaginations, and practices, continuing to do so at this day. And wherever they will lead the way, when faith goeth not before them to discover both way and end, they that lead, and the mind that is led, must fall into one snare and pit or another.

Wherefore affections that are spiritually renewed, move not, act not, but as faith discovers their object, and directs them unto it. It is faith that works by love; we can love nothing sincerely with divine love, but what we believe savingly with divine faith. Let our affections unto any spiritual things be never so vehement, if they spring not from faith, if they are not guided by it, they are neither accepted with God, nor will promote the interest of spirituality and holiness in our own souls; Heb. xi. 6. Matt. vi. 22, 23. And this is the reason whence we ofttimes see great and plausible appearances of spiritual affections, which yet endure only for a season. They have been awakened, excited, acted by one means or another, outward or inward; but not having

the light of faith to guide them unto their proper object, they either wither and die, as unto any appearing of spiritual motions, or else keep the mind tossed up and down in perpetual disquietment, without rest or peace. 'The foolish man wearieth himself, because he cannot find the way to the city.' So was it with them who on the account of their attendance unto the doctrine of Christ, are called his disciples; John vi. Having preached unto them about the bread which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto them that feed, they were greatly affected with it, and cried out, 'Lord, evermore give us of this bread;' ver. 34. But when he proceeded to declare the mystery of it, they having not faith to discern and apprehend it, their affections immediately decayed, and they forsook both him and his doctrine; ver. 66.

We may consider one especial instance of this nature. Persons every day fall under great and effectual convictions of sin, and of their danger or certain misery thereby. This stirs up and acts all their affections, especially their fears, hopes, desires, sorrow, self-revenge, according as their condition calls for them. Hence sometimes they grow restless in their complaints, and turn themselves every way for relief, like men that are out of the way, and bewildered in the night. But in this state and condition tell them of the only proper way and means of their relief, which, let the world say what it will, is Christ and his righteousness alone, with the grace of God in him, and they quickly discover that they are strange things unto them, such as they do not understand, nor indeed approve. They cannot see them, they cannot discern them, nor any beauty in them for which they should be desired.

Wherefore after their affections have been tossed up and down for a season, under the power and torment of this conviction, they come unto one or other of these issues with them. For either they utterly decay, and the mind loseth all sense of any impressions from them, so as that they wonder in themselves whence they were so foolish as to be tossed and troubled with such melancholy fancies, and so commonly prove as bad a sort of men as live upon the earth; or they take up in a formal, legal profession wherein they never attain to be spiritually minded. This is the best end that our

affections towards spiritual things, not guided by the light of faith, do come unto.

2. Faith hath a clear prospect into, and apprehension of, spiritual things, as they are in themselves, and in their own nature. It is true, the light of it cannot fully comprehend the nature of all those things which are the objects of its affections; for they are infinite and incomprehensible, such as are the nature of God, and the person of Christ; and some of them, as future glory, are not yet clearly revealed: but it discerns them all in a due manner, so as that they may in themselves, and not in any corrupt representation, or imagination of them, be the object of our affections. They are, as the apostle speaks, 'spiritually discerned;' 1 Cor. ii. 14. which is the reason why the natural man cannot receive them, namely, because he hath not ability spiritually to discern them. And this is the principal end of the renovation of our minds, the principal quality and effect of faith, namely, the communication unto our minds, and the acting in us, of a spiritual saving light, whereby we may see and discern spiritual things as they are in their own nature, kind, and proper use: see Ephes. i. 17—19. 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.' 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'God shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.' The end God designs, is to draw our hearts and affections unto himself. And unto this end, he gives unto us a glorious internal light, whereby we may be enabled to discern the true nature of the things that we are to cleave unto with love and delight. Without this we have nothing but false images of spiritual things in our minds; not always as unto the truth or doctrine concerning them, but as unto their reality, power, and efficacy. This is one of the principal effects of faith, as it is the principal part of the renovation of our minds, namely, to discover in the soul and represent unto the affections things spiritual and heavenly, in their

nature, beauty, and genuine excellency. This attracts them if they be spiritually renewed, and causeth them to cleave with delight unto what is so proposed unto them. He that believes in Christ in a due manner, who thereon discovers the excellency of his person, and the glory of his mediation, will both love him, and on his believing 'rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' So is it in all other instances; the more steady is our view by faith of spiritual things, the more firm and constant will our affections be in cleaving unto them. And wherever the mind is darkened about them, by temptation or seduction from the truth, there the affections will be quickly weakened and impaired. Wherefore,

3. Affections thus led unto, and fixed on spiritual and heavenly things under the light and conduct of faith, are more and more renewed, or made in themselves more spiritual and heavenly. They are in their cleaving unto them, and delight in them, continually changed and assimilated unto the things themselves; becoming more and more to be what they are, namely, spiritual and heavenly.

This transformation is wrought by faith, and is one of the most excellent faculties and operations; see 2 Cor. iii. 18. And the means whereby it works herein, are our affections. In them as we are carnal, we are conformed unto this world; and by them as sanctified, 'are we transformed in the renewing of our minds;' Rom. xii. 2. And this transformation is the introduction of a new form or nature into our souls, diverse from that wherewith we were before endued. So is it described, Isa. xi. 6—9. A spiritual nature they were changed into: and it is twofold.

1. Original and radical as to the substance or essence of it, which is the effect of the first act of divine grace upon our souls, when we are made new creatures. Herein our affections are passive; they do not transform us, but are transformed.

2. Gradual as unto its increase; and therein faith works in and by the affections.

Whenever the affections do cleave intensely unto any object, they receive an impression from it, as the wax doth from the seal when applied unto it, which changeth them into its own likeness. So the apostle affirms of sensual unclean

persons, they 'have eyes full of adultery;' 2 Pet. ii. 14. Their affections are so wholly possessed and filled with their lustful objects, as that they have brought forth their own likeness upon their imaginations. That blots out all others, and leaves them no inclinations but what they stir up in them. When men are filled with the 'love of this world,' which carries along with it all their other affections, their hopes, fears, and desires, unto a constant exercise about the same object, they become earthly minded. Their minds are so changed into the image of the things themselves, by the effectual working of the corrupt principles of sin, self-love, and lust, as if they were made up of the earth, and therefore have no savour of any thing else.

In like manner when by faith men come to embrace heavenly things, through the effectual working of a principle of spiritual life and grace in them, they are every day more and more made heavenly. The inward man is renewed day by day. Love is more sincere and ardent, delight is more ravishing and sensible, desires are more enlarged and intense, and by all a taste and relish of heavenly things is heightened into refreshing experience. See Rom. v. 2—5.

This is the way whereby one grace is added unto another, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6. in degrees. Great is the assimilation between renewed affections and their spiritual objects, that by this means may be attained.

The mind hereby becomes the temple of God, wherein he dwells by the Spirit; Christ also dwelleth in believers, and they in him. 'God is love,' and he that 'dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him;' 1 John iv. 16.

Love, in its proper exercise, gives a mutual inhabitation unto God and believers. In brief, he whose affections are set upon heavenly things in a due manner, will be heavenly minded. And in the due exercise of them, will that heavenly mindedness be increased. The transformation and assimilation that is wrought, is not in the object or spiritual things themselves; they are not changed neither in themselves, nor in the representation made of them unto our minds; but the change is in our affections, which are made like unto them.

Two cases deriving from this principle and consideration, may be here spoken unto, and shall be so; the first in this, and the other in the following chapter. The one is concern-

ing the slowness and imperceptibility of the growth of our affections in their assimilation unto heavenly things, with the causes and reasons of it. The other is, the decays that frequently befall men in their affections unto spiritual things, instead of growing and thriving in them, with the reasons and causes thereof.

1. This progress and growth of our affections into spirituality and heavenliness, into conformity unto the things they are set upon, is ofttimes very slow, and sometimes imperceptible. Yea, for the most part, it is a hard thing to find it satisfactorily in ourselves or others. Our affections stand like shrubs in the wilderness, which see not when good cometh, and are not like plants in a garden enclosed, which is watered every day. But it is not so without our folly and our sin.

1. The folly that keeps many in this condition, consists herein; the generality of Christians are contented with their present measures, and design little more, than not to lose the ground they have gained. And a pernicious folly it is that both ruins the glory of religion, and deprives the souls of men of peace and consolation. But so it is, men have some grounds of persuasion, or at least they hope, and suppose they have such grounds, that they are 'passed from death unto life,' that they are in a state of grace and acceptance with God. This state they will endeavour to preserve by a diligent performance of the duties it requireth, and the avoidance of such sins, whereby they might make a forfeiture of it. But as for earnest watchful endeavours and diligence to thrive in this state, to grow in grace, to be changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ, to 'press forward towards the mark of the high-calling,' and after perfection to lay hold upon eternal life, to be more holy, more humble, more righteous, more spiritually minded, to have their affections more and more transformed into the likeness of things above; they are but few, that sincerely and diligently apply themselves unto it, or unto the means of these things. The measures which they have attained unto, give satisfaction unto the church, and reputation in the world, that they are professors; and some so speak peace unto their own souls. To be more holy and heavenly, to have their affections more taken up with the things above, they suppose

somewhat inconsistent with their present occasions and affairs. By this means hath religion lost much of its glory, and the souls of men have been deprived of the principal advantages of it in this world.

Such persons are like unto men who live in a country wherein they are not only pressed with poverty, and all sorts of misery, but are also obnoxious unto grievous punishments, and death itself, if they are taken in it. In this condition they are told and assured of another country, wherein so soon as they are arrived, they shall be freed from all fear of danger of punishment, and if they pass farther into it, they shall meet with riches, plenty, and a fair inheritance provided for them. Hereon they betake themselves unto their voyage to obtain an entrance into it, and possession of it. But no sooner do they come within the borders, and so are free from danger, or fear of punishment and death, but they sit down and will go no farther, to enjoy the good things of the country whereunto they are come. And it falls out with many of them, that through their sloth, negligence, and ignorance, they take up short of the true bounds and limits of the country of liberty and peace which they aimed at, whereby danger and death surprise them unawares. This ruin could not have befallen them, had they industriously endeavoured to enter into the heart of the country, and have possessed the good things thereof. At best, being only in the borders, they lead a poor life all their days, exposed to wants and danger.

So it is in this case. Men falling under the power of convictions, and those restless fears wherewith they are accompanied, will stir up themselves, and inquire how they may 'fly from the wrath to come;' how they may be delivered from the state of sin, and the eternal misery which will ensue thereon.

In the gospel not only mercy and pardon are proposed unto them on their believing, which is the first entrance into the heavenly country; but peace, and joy, and spiritual strength upon their admission into it, and a progress made in it by faith and obedience. But many when they have attained so far, as that they have some hopes of pardon and freedom from the curse, so as to deliver them from their tor-

menting fears, will endeavour to preserve those hopes, and keep that state; but will not pass on to a full enjoyment of the precious things of the gospel, by growth in grace and spiritual affections. But how many of them fall under woful mistakes. For supposing themselves to be in a gospel state, it proves in the issue that they never entered into it. They were not, it may be, far from the kingdom of heaven, in the same sense as it was spoken of him who never came thither. There is no way to secure an interest in the gospel, as to pardon and mercy, safety and deliverance, but by a growth in grace, holiness, and spirituality, which gives an entrance into the choicest mercies and privileges of it.

This folly of men in taking up with their measures, endeavouring only to maintain that state and condition which they hope they have attained, is the great reason why their affections do not daily grow up into spirituality, through an assimilation unto heavenly things. And a folly it is, attended with innumerable aggravations. As for instance,

1. It is contrary and destructive unto the genuine and principal property of gospel grace. For it is every where compared by our Saviour unto things which from small seeds and beginnings, do grow up by a continual increase unto large measures, as to a grain of mustard seed, a little leaven, and the like.

That grace in whose nature it is not to thrive and grow, may justly be suspected, and ought diligently to be examined by them who take care of their own souls, and would not be eternally deceived.

2. It is contrary unto the most excellent or invaluable evangelical promises recorded in the Old Testament and the New; and which are amongst the principal supportments of the faith, hope, and comfort of believers. God hath given them unto us, to encourage us unto an expectation of such supplies of grace, as shall cause us to thrive and grow against all opposition, unto the utmost of our continuance in this world. And they are so multiplied as that there is no need to mention any of them in particular; God evidencing thereby how great is the grace, and how precious, which he so often promiseth, and of what consideration it is of unto ourselves: see Psal. xcii. 13—15. Isa. xl. 28—31. Where-

fore the folly of taking up with present measures of grace, holiness, and spirituality, is attended with two unspeakable evils.

1. A signal contempt of the love, grace, faithfulness, and wisdom of God, in giving of us such promises of grace, to make us to increase, thrive, and grow. How can it be done more effectually, than by such a neglect of his promised grace.

2. An evidence that such persons love not, care not for, grace or holiness for their own souls, but merely to serve their turn at present as they suppose; nor do desire the least of grace or privilege by Christ, without which they can have any hopes to get to heaven. This sufficiently discovers men to be wholly under the power of self-love, and to centre therein; for if they may have so much grace and mercy as may save them, they care for no more.

3. It is repugnant unto the honour of gospel grace, as though it would carry us so far, and no farther, in the way to glory. For it must be known that this sort of persons who sit down in their present measures and attainments, either really have no true grace at all, or that which is of the lowest, meanest, and most imperceptible size and degree. For if any one hath attained any considerable growth in faith and love, in the mortification of sin, in heavenly-mindedness, it is utterly impossible but that ordinarily he will be pressing forward towards farther attainments, and farther degrees of spiritual strength in the life of God. So the apostle declares it in his own example; Phil. iii. 10—14. What thoughts can these persons have concerning the glory, power, and efficacy of gospel grace, which they suppose they have received. If they measure them by the effects which they find in themselves, either as unto the mortification of sin, or strength unto, and delight in, duties of holiness, or as unto spiritual consolation, they can see no excellency nor beauty in them. For they do not manifest themselves but in their success, as they transform the soul daily into the image of Christ.

4. It is that which hath lost the reputation and glory of religion in the world, and therein the honour of the gospel itself. For the most of professors do take up with such measures as put no lustre upon it, as give no commendation unto the religion they profess. For their measures

allow them such a conformity unto the world, in their ways, words, and actions, in their gestures, apparel, and attire, as that they are no way visibly to be distinguished from it. Yea, the ground and reason why the most do rest in their present measures, is because they will not be farther differenced from the world. This hath greatly lost the glory, honour, and reputation of religion amongst us. And on the other side, if all visible professors would endeavour continually to grow and thrive in spirituality of mind, and heavenliness of affections, with fruits suited thereunto, it would bring a conviction on the world, that there is a secret invisible power, accompanying the religion they profess, transforming them daily into the image and likeness of God.

5. Whatever is pretended unto the contrary, it is inconsistent with all solid peace of conscience. For no such thing is promised unto any who live in such a contempt of divine promises; nor is it attainable but by the diligent exercise of all those graces which lie neglected under this frame. Few men are able to judge whether they have real, eternal, abiding peace or no, unless it be in case of trials and temptations. At other seasons, general hopes and confidences do, or may supply the want of it in their minds. But when any fear, danger, trial, or word of conviction befalls them, they cannot but inquire and examine how it is with them. And if they find their affections cold, dead, earthly, carnal, withering, not spiritual or heavenly, there will be an end of their supposed peace, and they will fall into woful disquietments, and they will then find that the root of all this evil lies in this frame and disposition. They have been so far satisfied with their present measures or attainments in religion, as that the utmost of their endeavours have been but to preserve their station, or not to forfeit it by open sins, to keep their souls alive from the severe reflections of the word, and their reputation fair in the church of God. Spiritually to thrive, to prosper in their souls, to wax fat and flourishing in the inward man, to bring forth more fruit as age increaseth, to press towards perfection, are things they have not designed nor pursued.

Hence it is that so many among us are visibly at an unthrifty stand in the world; that where they were one year,

there they are another, like shrubs in the wilderness, not like the plants in the garden of God, not as 'vines planted in a very fruitful hill.' Yea, though many are sensible themselves that they are cold, lifeless, and fruitless, yet will they not be convinced, that there is a necessity of making a daily progress in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, whereby the inward man may be renewed day by day, and grace augmented with the increase of God. This is a work, as they suppose, for them who have nothing else to do; not consistent with their business, callings, and occasions; not necessary as they hope unto their salvation, nor, it may be, to be attained by them if they should set themselves about it. This apprehension or imagination, upon the beginning of the declension and decay of Christian religion in the many, cast off holiness and devotion unto a sort of men who undertook to retire themselves utterly out of the world, amongst whom also the substance of religion was quickly lost, and a cloud, or meteor of superstition, embraced in the room of it. But this folly is ominous unto the souls of men.

Those who have made the greatest progress in the conformity of their affections unto things spiritual and heavenly, know most of its necessity, excellency, and desirableness; yea, without some progress in it, these things will not be known. Such will testify that the more they attain herein, the more they see there is yet to be attained, and the more they do desire to attain what is behind. Forgetting those things which are behind, they reach forth unto the things that are yet before them; like men running in a race, whose prize and reward is yet before them; Phil. iii. 13, 14. It is a comely thing to see a Christian weaned from the world, minding heavenly things, green and flourishing in spiritual affection. And it is the more lovely, because it is so rare. The generality of them take up with those measures, which neither glorify God, nor bring in durable peace into their own souls.

That which men pretend and complain of herein, is the difficulty of the work. They can as they suppose preserve their present station, but to press forward, to grow in grace, to thrive in their affections, this is too hard for them. But this complaint is unequal and unjust, and adds unto the

guilt of their sloth. It reflects upon the words of our Saviour, that his 'yoke is easy, and his burden light;' that his 'commandments are not grievous.' It expresseth unbelief in the promises of God, tendering such supplies of grace as to render all the ways of wisdom easy, yea, mercy and peace. It is contrary unto the experience of all who have with any sincerity and diligence engaged in the ways of gospel obedience. And the whole cause of the pretended difficulty lies in themselves alone; which may be reduced unto these two heads:

1. A desire to retain some thing or things, that is, or are, inconsistent with such a progress. For unless the heart be ready on all occasions to esteem every thing as loss and dung, so as we may win Christ, the work will be accompanied with insuperable difficulties. This is the first principle of religion, of gospel obedience, that all things are to be despised for Christ. But this difficulty ariseth not from the thing itself, but from our indisposition unto it, and unfitness for it. That which is an easy pleasant walk unto a sound and healthy man, is a toilsome journey to him that is diseased and infirm. In particular, whilst men will retain an inordinate respect unto the world, the vanities, the pleasures, the profits, the contentments, of it; whilst self-love, putting an undue valuation on our persons, our relations, our enjoyments, our reputations, doth cleave unto us, we shall labour in the fire when we engage in this duty; or rather we shall not at all sincerely engage in it; wherefore the apostle tells us, that in this case we must cast off 'every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us,' if we intend 'to run with joy the race that is set before us;' Heb. xii. 1.

2. It is because men dwell continually upon the entrances of religion in the first and lowest exercise of grace: some are always beginning at religion, and the beginning of things are always difficult. They design not to be complete in the whole will of God, nor to give all graces their perfect work. They do not with use habituate grace unto a readiness in all the actings of it, which the apostle commends in them that are perfect or complete; Heb. v. 14. Hence he calls such persons babes, and carnal, comparatively unto them that are strong men and spiritual. Such persons do not oblige themselves unto the whole work, and

all the duties of religion, but only what they judge necessary unto them in their present circumstances. In particular, they do not attempt a thorough work in the mortification of any sin, but are hewing and hacking at it, as their convictions are urgent or abate, the wounds whereof in the body of sin are quickly healed. They give not any grace its perfect work, but are always making essays, and so give over.

Whilst it is thus with any, they shall always be deluded with the apprehensions of insuperable difficulties, as to the growth of their affections in spirituality and heavenliness. Remove these things out of the way as they ought to be removed, and we shall find all the paths wherein we are to walk towards God to be pleasantness and peace.

This is the first cause whence it is, that there may be affections truly spiritual and graciously renewed in some persons, who yet do not thrive in an assimilation and conformity unto heavenly things. Men take up with their present measures; and thereon pretend either necessary occasion, or discouragements from difficulties in attempting spiritual growth in the inward man. But they may thank themselves, if as they bring no honour unto Christ, so they have no solid peace in their own souls.

2. As the evil proceedeth from folly, so it is always the consequent of sin, of many sins, of various sorts. Let us not dwell on heartless complaints, that we do not find our affections lively and heavenly; that we do not find the inward man to thrive or grow. Let us not hearken after this or that relief or comfort under this consideration, as many things are usually insisted on unto that purpose. They may be of use, when persons are under temptations, and not able to make a right judgment of themselves. But in the course of our ordinary walking with God, they are not to be attended, nor retired unto. The general reason of this evil state, is our own sinful carelessness, negligence, and sloth, with perhaps an indulgence unto some known lust or corruption. And we do in vain seek after refreshing cordials, as though we were only spiritually faint, when we stand in need of lancings and burnings, as nigh unto a lethargy. It would be too long to give instances of these sins, which fail not effectually to obstruct the thriving of spiritual af-

fections. But in general, when men are careless as unto that continual watch which they ought to keep over their hearts; whilst they are negligent in holy duties, either as unto the seasons of them, or the manner of their performance; when they are strangers unto holy meditation and self-examination; whilst they inordinately pursue the things of the world, or are so tender and delicate, as that they will not undergo the hardship of a heavenly life, either as unto the inward or outward man; much more when they are vain in their conversation, corrupt in their communication, especially if under the predominant influence of any particular lust; it is vain to think of thriving in spiritual affections. And yet thus it is with all who ordinarily, and in their constant course, are thriftless herein.

CHAP. XVII.

Decays in spiritual affections, with the causes and danger of them. Advice unto them who are sensible of the evil of spiritual decays.

It must be acknowledged, that there is yet that which is worse than what we have yet insisted on, and more opposite unto the growth of affections in conformity unto heavenly things, which is the proper character of those that are spiritually renewed. And this is their spiritual decay manifesting itself in sensible and visible effects.

Some there are, yea many, who upon the beginning of a profession of their conversion unto God, have made a great appearance of vigorous, active, spiritual affections; yea, it is so with most, it may be, all who are really so converted. God takes notice of the love of the youth in his people, of the love of their espousals.

In some, this vigour of spiritual affections is from the real power of grace, exerting its efficacy on their hearts and in their minds. In others, it is from other causes, as for instance, relief from conviction by spiritual illumination will produce this effect. And this falls out unto their advantage of such persons that generally a change is wrought in their younger days; for then their affections in their natural powers are active, and bear great sway in the whole soul.

Wherefore the change that is made is most eminent in them, be it what it will. But as men increase in age, and thereon grow up in carnal wisdom, and a great valuation of earthly things, with their care about them and converse in them, they abate and decay in their spiritual affections every day. They will abide in their profession, but have lost their first love.

It is a shame and folly unutterable, that it should be so with any who make profession of that religion, wherein there are so many incomparable excellencies to endear and engage them to it more and more: but why should we hide what experience makes manifest in the sight of the sun, and what multitudes proclaim concerning themselves? Wherefore I look upon it as a great evidence, if not absolutely of the sincerity of grace, yet of the life and growth of it, when men, as they grow up in age, do grow in an undervaluation of present things, in contempt of the world, in duties of charity and bounty, and decay not in any of them. But, I say, it is usual that the entrances of men's profession of religion and conversation unto God, are attended with vigorous, active affections toward spiritual things. Of them who really and sincerely believed, it is said that on their believing, 'they rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' And of those who only had a work of conviction on them, improved by temporary faith, that 'they received the word with joy, and did many things gladly.'

In this state do many abide and thrive, until their affections be wholly transformed into the image and likeness of things above. But with many of all sorts it is not so; they fall into woful decays as unto their affections about spiritual things, and consequently in their whole profession and conversation, their moisture becomes as the drought in summer. They have no experience of the life and actings of them in themselves, nor any comfort or refreshment from them; they honour not the gospel with any fruits of love, zeal, or delight, nor are useful any way unto others by their example. Some of them have had seeming recoveries, and are yet again taken into a lifeless frame: warnings, afflictions, sicknesses, the word, have awakened them, but they are fallen again into a dead sleep; so as that they seem to be trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.

Some things must be spoken unto this woful condition in general, as that which is directly opposite unto the grace and duty of being spiritually minded; and contrary unto, and obstructive of, the growth of spiritual affections in an assimilation unto heavenly things. And what shall be spoken may be applied unto all the degrees of these decays, though all of them are not alike dangerous or perilous.

1. There may be a time of temptation, wherein a soul may apprehend in itself not only a decay in, but an utter loss of, all spiritual affections, when yet it is not so. As believers may apprehend and judge that the Lord hath forsaken and forgotten them when he hath not done so, Isa. xlix. 14, 15. So they may under their temptations apprehend, that they have forsaken God, when they have not done so: and a man in the night may apprehend he hath lost his way, and be in great distress, when he is in his proper road. For temptation brings darkness and amazement, and leads into mistakes and a false judgment in all things. They find not, it may be, grace working in love, joy, and delight as formerly, nor that activity of heart and mind in holy duties which spiritual affections gave unto them. But yet, it may be, the same grace works in godly sorrow, by mourning, humiliation, and self-abasement, no less effectually, nor less acceptably unto God. Such as these I separate from the present consideration.

2. There may be a decay in affections themselves as unto their actings towards any objects whatever; at least as unto the outward symptoms and effects of them, and on this ground, their operations toward spiritual things may be less sensible. So men in their younger days may be more ready to express their sorrow by tears, and their joy by sensible exaltation and motion of their spirits, than in riper years. And this may be so, when there is no decay of grace in the affections as renewed. But

1. When it is so, it is a burden unto them in whom it is. They cannot but mourn and have a godly jealousy over themselves, least the decays they find should not be in the outward, but the inward, not in the natural, but the spiritual man. And they will labour that in all duties, and at all times, it may be with them, as in days of old, although they cannot

attain strength in them, that vigour of spirit, that life, joy, peace, and comfort, which any have had experience of.

2. There will be in such persons no decays in holiness of life, nor as unto diligence in all religious duties. If the decay be really of grace in the affections, it will be accompanied with a proportionable decay in all other things, wherein the life of God is concerned. But if it be only as unto the sensible actings of natural affections, no such decay will ensue.

3. Grace will in this case more vigorously act itself in the other faculties and powers of the soul, as the judgment and the will in their approbation of, and firm adherence unto, spiritual things. But,

4. When men find, or may find, their affections yet quick, active, and intent on other things, as the lawful enjoyments and comforts of this life, it is in vain for them to relieve themselves, that the decays they find are in their affections as natural, and not, as they ought to be, gracious. If we see a man in his old age grow more in love with the things of this world, and less in love with the things of God, it is not through the weakness of nature, but through the strength of sin.

On these, and, it may be, some other the like occasions, there may be an apprehension of a decay in spiritual affections, when it may not be so, at least not unto the degree that is apprehended. But when it is so really, as it is evidently with many, I had almost said with the most in these days, it is a woful frame of heart, and never enough to be lamented. It is that which lies in direct contradiction unto that spiritual mindedness which is life and peace. It is a consumption of the soul which threatens it with death every day.

It belongs not unto my design to treat of it in particular; yet I cannot let it pass without some remarks upon it, it being an evil almost epidemical among professors, and prevalent in some unto such a degree, as that they seem to be utterly forsaken of all powers of spiritual life.

Now besides all that folly and sin which we before discovered as the causes of the want of the growth of our affections in spirituality and heavenliness, which in this case of their decay are more abominable, there is a multiplication

of evils wherewith this state of heart and mind is accompanied. For,

1. It is that which of all things the Lord Christ is most displeased with in churches or professors. He pities them in their temptations, he suffers with them in their persecution, he intercedes for them on their surprisal, but threatens them under their spiritual decays; Rev. ii. 4, 5. iii. 2. This he cannot bear with, as that which both reflects dishonour upon himself, and which he knows to be ruinous unto those in whom it is. He will longer bear with them who are utterly dead, than with those who abide under these decays; Rev. iii. 15, 16. This is the only case wherein he threatens to reject and cast off a professing church, to take away his candlestick from it, unless it be that of false worship and idolatry. He that spake thus unto the churches of old, speaks now the same unto us; for he lives for ever, and is always the same, and his word is living and unchangeable. There is not one of us who are under this frame, but the Lord Christ, by his word and Spirit, testifieth his displeasure against us; and if he be against us, who shall plead for us. Consider what he says in this case, Rev. ii. 5. iii. 3. O who can stand before these dreadful intimations of his displeasure! The Lord help us to mind it, lest he in whom we profess to place our only trust, be in our trial found our greatest enemy. Take heed of such sins as Christ himself, our only advocate, hath put a mark upon, as those which he will not save us in.

2. It is that wherewith above all things the Holy Spirit is grieved. His work it is to give grace an increase and progress in our souls. He begins it, and he carries it on. And there can be no greater grief unto a wise and gracious worker, than to have his work decay and go backward under his hand. This is the occasion of those complaints of God which we find in the Scripture, of the unprofitableness and backsliding of men after the use of means and remedies for their fruitfulness and cure. 'What,' saith he, 'could I have done more for my vineyard than I have done? Why, then, when I looked for grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?' Can any thing be apprehended to be such a just matter of grief and complaint unto the Holy Spirit, to see and find those whom he had once raised up unto holy and

heavenly affections, so as that their delights were in, and their thoughts much upon, the things that are above, to become earthly or sensual, to have no sensible actings of any of his graces in them, which is the state of them who are under the power of spiritual decays? And this is the only cause wherein God speaks unto men in the way of complaint and expostulation; and useth all sorts of arguments to convince them of their folly herein.

When a wise, tender, and careful parent, hath been diligent in the use of all means for the education of his child, and he for some time hath given good hopes of himself, finds him to slacken in his diligence, to be careless in his calling, to delight in evil company, how solicitous is his heart about him, how much is he grieved and affected with his miscarriage. The heart of the Spirit of God is infinitely more tender towards us, than that of the most affectionate parent can be towards an only child. And when he with cost and care hath nourished and brought us up unto some growth and progress in spiritual affections, wherein all his concerns in us do lie, for us to grow cold, dull, earthly-minded, to cleave unto the pleasures or lusts of this world, how is he grieved, how is he provoked. It may be this consideration of grieving the Holy Spirit is of no great weight with some; they should have little concernment herein, if they could well free themselves in other respects; but let such persons know, it is impossible for them to give a greater evidence of a profligate hardness in sin.

3. This is that which in an especial manner provoketh the judgments of God against any church, as was intimated before, when in the order of profession and worship, any church hath a name to live, but as to the power of grace acting in the affections, is dead: when it is not so cold as to forsake the external institutions of worship, nor so hot as to enliven their duties with spiritual affections, the Lord Christ will not long bear with them; yea, judgment will suddenly break out towards such a house of God.

4. It is absolutely inconsistent with all comfortable assurance of the love of God. Whatever persons under the power of such a frame, pretend unto of that kind, it is sinful security, not gracious assurance or peace. And constantly as professors grow cold and decay in their spiritual affec-

tions, stupidity of conscience, and security of mind, do grow also upon them. It is so, I say, unless they are sometimes surprised or overtaken with some greater sin, which reflects severely on their consciences, and casts them for a time under troubles and distresses. But that peace with God, and a comfortable assurance of salvation, should be consistent with an habitual decay in grace, especially in those graces which should act themselves in our affections, is contrary to the whole tenor and testimony of the Scripture; and the supposition of it would be the bane and poison of religion. I do not say that our assurance and peace with God do arise wholly from the actings of grace in us; there are other causes of them, whereinto they are principally resolved: but this I say, under an habitual declension or decay of grace in the spirituality of our affections, no man can keep or maintain a gracious sense of the love of God, or of peace with him. And therefore there is no duty more severely to be pressed on all at this day, than a diligent examination and trial of the grounds of their peace; lest it should be with any of them as it was with Laodicea, who was satisfied in her good state and condition, when it was most miserable, and almost desperate. Yea, I must say, that it is impossible that many professors, whom we see and converse withal, should have any solid peace with God. 'Do men gather figs from thorns, or grapes from thistles?' It is a fruit that will not grow on a vain, earthly, selfish frame of mind and conversation. And therefore such persons, whatever they pretend, are either asleep in a sinful security, or live on most uncertain hopes, which probably may deceive them. Nothing can be so ruinous unto our profession as once to suppose it is an easy matter, a thing of course, to maintain our peace with God. God forbid but that our utmost diligence, and continued endeavours to thrive in every grace, should be required thereunto. The whole beauty and glory of our religion depends hereon. 'To be spiritually minded is life and peace.'

5. Such a decay as that described, is a dangerous symptom of an evil state and condition, and that those in whom it is, will at last be found to be but hypocrites. I know such persons will, or may, have pretended evidences unto the contrary, and that they are well enough satisfied of and

with their own sincerity in many things; so as that it is impossible to fix upon them the sense and conviction of being but hypocrites. But this apprehension ariseth from a false notion of hypocrisy. No man they suppose is a hypocrite, but he that generally or universally pretends himself in religion to be what he is not, and what he knows himself not to be, or at least might easily do so. And it is true, that this is the broadest notion of pharisaical hypocrisy. But take a hypocrite for him who, under light, profession, gifts, duties, doth habitually and willingly fail in any point of sincerity, he is no less a perishing hypocrite than the former, and it may alter the case with them. I do not say that every one in whom there is this prevalent decay in spiritual affections is a hypocrite; God forbid; I only say that where it continues without remedy, it is such a symptom of hypocrisy, as that he who is wise, and hath a care of his soul, will not rest until he hath searched it unto the bottom. For it seems as if it were thus with such persons, they have had a false or imperfect work in that conversion unto God which they have professed. Conviction of sin, communication of spiritual light and gifts, alteration upon the affections, change of society and conversation, have made it up. Now it is the nature of such a work greatly to flourish for a season, in all the principal parts and duties of profession. But it is in its nature also gradually to decay, until it be quite withered away. In some it is lost by the power of some vigorous temptations, and particular lusts indulged unto, ending in worldliness and sensuality; but in the most it decays gradually, until it hath lost all its savour and sap; see John xv. 3. Wherefore, whilst men find this decay in themselves, unless they are fallen under the power of a destructive security, unless they are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they cannot but think it their duty to examine how things stand with them, whether they ever effectually closed with Christ, and had the faith of God's elect, which works by love; seeing it is with them, as though they had only a work of another nature. For a saving work in its own nature, and in the diligent use of means, thrives and groweth, as the whole Scripture testifieth: but it is this false and imperfect working that hath no root, and is thus subject to withering.

6. Persons in such an estate are apt to deceive themselves with false hopes and notions, whereby the deceitfulness of sin doth put forth its power, to harden them unto their ruin. Two ways there are whereby this pernicious effect is produced. The one by the prevalency of a particular lust or sin, the other by a neglect of spiritual duties, and a vain conversation in the world, under which the soul pines away and consumes.

As unto the first of these, there are three false notions, whereby the deceitfulness of sin deludes the souls of men.

1. The first is, that it is that one sin alone wherein they would be indulged. Let them be spared in this one thing, and in all other they will be exact enough. This is the composition that Naaman would have made in the matters of religion; 2 Kings v. 18. and it is that which many trust unto. Hence it hath by the event been made to appear, that some persons have lived long in the practice of some gross sins, and yet all the while used a semblance of great diligence in other duties of religion. This is a false notion whereby poor sinners delude their own souls. For suppose it possible that a man should give himself up unto any lust, or be under the power of it, and yet be observant of all other duties, yet this would give him no relief as unto the eternal condition of his soul. The rule is peremptory unto this purpose; Jam. ii. 10, 11. One sin willingly lived in is as able to destroy a man's soul as a thousand. Besides, it is practically false. There is no man that lives in any one known sin, but he really lives in more, though that only bear the chiefest sway. With some such persons, these sins appear unto others, who observe their frame and spirit, though they appear not to themselves; in some they are manifest in themselves, although they are hidden from others; 1 Tim. v. 24. But let no man relieve himself with thoughts that it is but one sin, whilst that one sin keeps him in a constant neglect of God. Hence,

2. They deceive themselves hereby, for they judge that although they cannot as yet shake off their sin, yet they will continue still to love God, and abound in the duties of his worship. They will not become haters of God and his ways, and persecutors for all the world, and therefore hope that notwithstanding this one Zoar, this lesser sin, which their consti-

tution and their circumstances engage them in, that it may be well with them at the last. This also is a false notion, a mere instrument in the hand of sin to act its deceit by. For no man that willingly liveth in any sin, can love God at all, as is evident in that rule; 1 John ii. 15. It is but a false pretence of love to God that any man hath, who liveth in any known sin. Where God is not loved above all, he is not loved at all: and he is not so where men will not part with one cursed lust for his sake. Let not your light deceive you, nor your gifts, nor your duties, nor your profession; if you live in sin, you love not God.

3. They determine that at such or such a season or time, after such satisfaction given unto their lusts or pleasures, they will utterly give over, so as that iniquity shall not be their ruin. But this is a false notion also, an effectual instrument of the deceitfulness of sin. He that will not now give over, who will not immediately upon the discovery of the prevalency of any sin, and warning about it, endeavour sincerely and constantly its relinquishment, say what he will, and pretend what he will, he never intends to give over; nor is it probable, in an ordinary way, that ever he will do so. When men's decays are from the prevalency of particular sins, by these and the like false notions do they harden themselves unto ruin.

For those who are pining away under hectical consumption, a general decay of the vital spirits of religion, they have also false notions whereby they deceive themselves. As,

1. That although they have some cause to mistrust themselves, yet indeed their condition is not so bad as some may apprehend it, or as they are warned it is. And this ariseth from hence, that they have not as yet been overtaken with any enormous sin, which hath filled their consciences with terror and disquietment. But this is a false notion also; for every decay is dangerous, especially such as the mind is ready to plead for, and to countenance itself in.

2. They are prone to suppose that this decay doth not arise from themselves, and the evil of their own hearts; but from their circumstances, business, present occasion, and state of life, which when they are freed from, they will at least return unto their former love, and delight in spiritual

things. But this is a false notion also, by virtue of that rule, Heb. iii. 12. Let men's circumstances and occasions of life be what they will, all their departures from God are from an evil heart of unbelief.

3. They judge it no hard matter to retrieve themselves out of this state, but that which they can easily do, when there is an absolute necessity of it. But this is a false notion also. Recovery from backsliding is the hardest task in Christian religion, and which few make either comfortable or honourable work of.

In this state, I say, men are apt by such false reasonings to deceive themselves unto their eternal ruin; which makes the consideration of it the more necessary.

Wherefore, I say, lastly, upon the whole, that whoso find themselves under the power of this wretched frame, who are sensible in themselves, or at least make it evident unto others, that they are under a decay in their spiritual condition; if they rest in that state, without groaning, labouring, endeavouring for deliverance from it, they can have no well-grounded hopes in themselves of life and immortality; yea, they are in those 'paths which go down unto the chambers of death.'

I cannot let this pass without something of advice unto them who find themselves under such decays, are sensible of them, and would be delivered from them, and I shall give it in a few words.

First, Remember former things; call to mind how it was with you in the spring and vigour of your affections, and compare your present state, enjoyment, peace, and quiet, with what they were then. This will be a great principle of return to God; Hos. ii. 7. And to put a little weight upon it, we may consider,

1. God himself makes it on his part a ground and reason of his return unto us in a way of mercy, and of the continuance of his love; Jer. ii. 2. Even when a people are under manifold decays, whilst yet they are within the bounds of God's covenant and mercy, he will remember their first love, with the fruits and actings of it, in trials and temptations, which moves his compassion towards them. And the way to have God thus remember it, is for us to remember

with delight and longing of soul that it were with us as in those days of old, when we had the love of espousals for God in Christ; Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

2. It is the way whereby the saints of old have refreshed and encouraged themselves under their greatest despondencies. So doth the psalmist in many places, as for instance, Psal. xlii. 6. 'O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.' David in the time of his persecution by Saul, when he wandered up and down in deserts, wildernesses, and solitudes, had, under his fears, distresses, and exercise, great, holy, spiritual communion with God, as many of his Psalms composed on such occasions do testify. And the greater his distresses were, the more fervent were his affections in all his addresses unto God. And he was never in greater than when he escaped out of the cave at Adullam, and went thence unto Mizpeh of Moab, to get shelter for his parents; 1 Sam. xxii. 3. Then was he in the land of the Hermonites, the hill Hermon being the boundary eastward of the Israelites' possession next to Moab; Deut. iii. 8, 9. There no doubt David had a blessed exercise of his faith, and of all his affections towards God, wherein his soul found great refreshment. Being now in great distress and disconsolation of spirit, among other things under a sense that God had forgotten him, ver. 9. he calls to mind the blessed experience he had of communion with God in the land of the Hermonites, wherein he now found support and refreshment. So at other times, he called to remembrance 'the days of old,' and in them his 'song in the night,' or the sweet refreshment he had in spiritual converse with God in former times. I have known one in the depth of distress and darkness of mind, who going through temptation to destroy himself, was relieved and delivered in the instant of ruin, by a sudden remembrance that at such a time, and in such a place, he had prayed fervently with the engagement of all his affections unto God.

Wherefore you that are sensible of these decays, or ought so to be, take the advice of our Saviour, 'Remember whence you are fallen;' call to mind the former days; consider if it were not better with you than now; when in your lying down, and your rising up, you had many thoughts of God, and

of the things of God, and they were sweet and precious unto your souls? when you rejoiced at the remembrance of his holiness? When you had zeal for his glory, delight in his worship, and were glad when they said, 'Let us go to the house of God together?' When you poured forth your souls with freedom, and enlarged affections before him, and were sensible of the visits and refreshments of his love? Remember what peace, what tranquillity of mind, what joy you had, whilst it was so with you; and consider what you have gotten since you have forsaken God, in any measure or degree. Dare to deal plainly with yourselves. Is not all wherein you have now to do with God, either form, custom, and selfishness, or attended with trouble, disquietment, and fears? Do you truly know, either how to live, or how to die? Are you not sometimes a terror unto yourselves? It must be so, unless you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What have all your lovers done for you, that you have entertained in the room of God in Christ, and spiritual things? Speak plainly, have they not defiled you, wounded you, weakened you, and brought you into that condition, that you know not what you are, nor to whom ye do belong? What are your thoughts when you are most awake, when you are most yourselves? Do you not sometimes pant within yourselves, and say, 'O that it were with us as in former days.'

And if you can be no way affected with the remembrance of former things; then one of these two great evils you are certainly under. For either, 1. You never had a true and real work on your souls, whatever you professed; and so never had true and real communion with God in any duties. You had only a temporary work, which excited your affections for a season, which, now it is worn off, leaves no sweet remembrance of itself upon your minds. Had your faith and love been sincere in what you did, it were impossible but that the remembrance of their actings, in some especial instances, should be sweet and refreshing unto you. Or else,

2. You are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and there is no way left to give a sense or impression of spiritual things upon your minds. You have truly nothing left in religion, but the fear of hell, and trouble of duties. I speak not to such at present.

As unto those unto whom this frame is a burden, there is no more effectual means to stir them unto endeavours for deliverance, than a continual remembrance of former things, and experiences they have had of holy intercourse and communion with God. This will revive, quicken, and strengthen the things that are ready to die, and beget a self-abhorrency in them, in consideration of that woful frame and temper of mind, which by their sins and negligence they have brought themselves into.

Secondly, Consider that as there are many things dreadfully pronounced in the Scripture against backsliding and backsliders in heart, as it is with you, yet also there are especial calls and promises given and proposed unto those in your condition. And know assuredly, that upon your compliance or non-compliance with them, depends your everlasting blessedness or woe.

Consider both call and promise in that word of God's grace, Jer. iii. 12—14. 'Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.' Add thereunto this blessed promise, Hos. xiv. 4. 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from them.' If you design to live and not die, it must be by yielding obedience unto this call, and pleading this promise before God, mixing it with faith. Your return must be by the word; Isa. lvii. 18, 19. Here lies your great encouragement and direction, herein lieth your only relief. As you value your souls, defer not the duty you are called unto one moment. You know not how soon you may be without the reach of calls and promises. And he that can hear them without stirring up himself in sincerity to comply with them, hath made already a great progress towards that length.

Thirdly, As unto those who on these and the like consi-

derations do not only desire, but will endeavour also to retrieve themselves from this condition, I shall give no advice at present but this; be in good earnest. As the prophet speaks in another case; if you will return, 'return and come,' make thorough work of it. You must do so at one time or another, or you will perish. Why not now? Why is not this the best season? Who knows but it may be the only time you will have for it? It were easy to multiply all sorts of arguments unto this purpose. Trifling endeavours, occasional resolutions and attempts, like the early cloud, and morning dew, shifting with warnings and convictions, by renewed duties until their impressions are worn out, will ruin your souls. Unless there be universal diligence and permanency in your endeavours, you are undone. Then shall ye know the Lord, if you follow on to know him.

But now to return. These things, I say, through our sloth, negligence, and sin, may befall us, as unto our spiritually renewed affections. Their progress in conformity unto spiritual and heavenly things, may be slow, imperceptible, yea, totally obstructed for a season; and not only so, but they may fall under decays, and the soul therein be guilty of backsliding from God. But this is that which they are capacitated for by their renovation; this is that whereby the grace wherewith they are renewed doth lead unto; this is that which, in the diligent use of means, they will grow up unto, whereon our comfort and peace do depend; namely, a holy assimilation unto those spiritual and heavenly things which they are set and fixed on, wherein they are renewed and made more spiritual and heavenly every day.

CHAP. XVIII.

It remains only as unto this head now spoken unto, that we briefly consider what is the state of spiritual affections thus daily exercised and improved. And this we shall do by shewing,

First, What is their pattern.

Secondly, What is their rule.

Thirdly, What is their measure, or whereunto they may attain.

First, The pattern which we ought continually to bear in our eyes, whereunto our affections ought to be conformed, is Jesus Christ, and the affections of his holy soul. The mind is the seat of all our affections; and this is that we ought continually to design and endeavour, namely, that the 'same mind be in us, that was in Christ Jesus;' Phil. ii. 5. To have our minds so affected with spiritual things, as was the mind of Christ, is the principal part of our duty and grace. Nor do I think that any man can attain any considerable degree in spiritual mindedness, who is not much in the contemplation of the same mind in Christ; 2 Cor. iii. 18. To this purpose ought we to furnish our minds with instances of the holy affections that were in Christ, and their blessed exercise on all occasions. The Scripture makes a full representation of them unto us, and we ought to be conversant in our meditations on them. What glorious things are spoken of his love to God, and his delight in him, whence also he 'delighted to do his will, and his law was in the midst of his bowels;' Psal. xl. 8. seated in the throne of his affections. What pity and compassion had he for the souls of men, yea, for the whole human kind, in all their sufferings, pains, and distresses? How were all his affections always in perfection of order under the conduct of the spirit of his mind? Thence was his self-denial, his contempt of the world, his readiness for the cross, to do or suffer according to the will of God. If this pattern be continually before us, it will put forth a transforming efficacy, to change us unto the same image. When we find our minds liable unto any disorders, cleaving inordinately unto the things of this world, moved with intemperate passions, vain and frothy in conversation, darkened, or disturbed by the fumes of distempered lusts, let us call things to an account, and ask of ourselves, whether this be the frame of mind that was in Christ Jesus. This therefore is an evidence that our affections are spiritually renewed, and that they have received some progress in an assimilation unto heavenly things; namely, when the soul is delighted in making Christ their pattern in all things.

Secondly, The rule of our affections in their utmost spiritual improvement is the Scripture. And two things are respected in them:

1. Their internal actings.

2. Their exercise in outward ways and means whereby they are expressed. Of them both the Scripture is the entire rule. And with respect unto the former, it gives us one general law or rule that is comprehensive of all others; namely, 'that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. The actings of all our affections towards God in the utmost degree of perfection is required of us; that in all instances we prefer and value him above all things; that we inseparably cleave unto him, and do nothing whatever at any time, that is not influenced and directed by the love of God. This perfection, as we shall see immediately, is not attainable absolutely in this life; but it is proposed unto us as that which the excellency of God's nature requires, and which the faculties and powers of our nature were created for, and which we ought in all things to design and aim at. But the indispensable obligation of this rule is, that we should always be in a sincere endeavour to cleave unto God continually in all things, to prefer him above all, and delight in him as our chiefest good. When this frame and disposition is habitually fixed in our minds, it will declare and act itself in all instances of duties, on all occasions of trial, when other things put in for a predominant interest in our affections, as they do every day. And if it be not so with us, we shall be at a continual loss in all our ways. This is that which makes us lifeless and heartless in duties, careless in temptations or occasions of them, forgetful of God, when it is impossible we should be preserved from sin without a due remembrance of his holiness. In brief, the want of a predominant love unto God, kept in continual exercise, is the spring of all that unprofitable profession of religion that the world is filled withal.

2. There are outward ways and duties whereby our spiritual affections are expressed. The rule of them also is the Scripture. The way marked out therein, is the only channel wherein the stream of spiritual affections doth take its course unto God. The graces required therein, are to act themselves by; the duties it prescribes, are those which they stir up and enliven; the religious worship it appoints is that wherein they have their exercise. Where this rule hath been neglected, men's religious affections have grown irregular, yea, wild and ungovernable. All the superstitions that the

world is filled withal, owe their original principally unto men's affections set at loose from the rule of the word. There is nothing so fond, absurd, and foolish, but they have imbondaged the souls of men unto, nothing so horrid and difficult but they have engaged them in. And having once taken unto themselves this liberty, the corrupt minds of men are a thousand times more satisfied, than in the regular exercise of them according to the word of God. Hence they will rejoice in such penances as are not without their austerities; in such outward duties of devotion, as are troublesome and chargeable; in every thing that hath a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglect of the body. Hence will all their affections be more sensibly moved by images and pictures, and a melting devotion be stirred up in them, than by all the motives and incentives which God proposeth unto them to draw their affections unto himself. Nothing is more extravagant than the affections of men, tinctured with some devotion, if they forsake the rule of the Scripture.

Thirdly, There is considerable concerning them, the measure of their attainments, or what through due exercise and holy diligence they may be raised unto. Now this is not absolute perfection. 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after,' as the apostle speaks, Phil. iii. 12. But there is that attainable, which those who pretend highly unto perfection seem to be strangers unto. And the state of our affections under a due exercise on heavenly things, and in their assimilation unto them, may be fixed in these three things.

1. An habitual suitableness unto spiritual things, upon the proposal of them. The ways whereby spiritual things are proposed unto our minds are various. They are so directly in all ordinances of divine worship; they are so indirectly and in just consequence, by all the especial providences wherein we are concerned, by our own thoughts and stated meditations; they are so by the motions of the Holy Spirit, when he causeth us to hear a 'word behind us saying, This is the way, walk in it;' by holy converse with others; by all sorts of occurrences. And as the ways of their proposal are various, so the times and seasons wherein a representation of them is made unto us, are comprehensive of all,

at least are not exclusive of any, times and seasons of our lives. Be the way of their proposal what it will, and whenever be the season of it, if our affections are duly improved by spiritual exercises, they are suited unto them, and will be ready to give them entertainment. Hence, or for want hereof, on the other hand, are tergiversations and shiftings in duties, proneness to comply with diversion, all to keep off the mind from closing with, and receiving of, those spiritual things which it is not suited unto. Wherefore, as unto the solemn way of proposing spiritual things unto our minds which is in and by the ordinances of divine worship, when men have a prevalent loathness to engage in them, or when they are satisfied with an outward attendance on them, but not enabled unto a vigorous stirring up of the inward man unto a holy affectionate converse with spiritual and heavenly things, it is because they are carnal. When men can receive the fiery darts of Satan in his temptations into their bosoms, and suffer them to abide there, yea, foster and cherish them in thoughts of the lusts that they kindle, but quickly quench the motions of the Spirit, stirring them up unto the embracing of heavenly things; they are carnal, and carnally minded. When providences of concernment in afflictions, trials, deliverances, do not engage the mind into thoughts of spiritual things, and excite the affections unto the entertainment of them, men are carnal and earthly. When every lust, corruption, or passion, as anger, envy, displeasure at this or that person or thing, can divert the mind from compliance with the proposal of spiritual things that is made unto it, we are carnal.

It is otherwise when our affections are conformed unto things spiritual and heavenly. Upon every proposal of this the mind finds a suitableness unto itself, like that which a well-disposed appetite finds unto savoury meat. As the 'full soul loaths the honey-comb,' so a mind under the power of carnal affections hath an aversion unto all spiritual sweetness. But spiritualized affections desire them, have an appetite unto them, readily receive them on all occasions, as those which are natural unto them, as milk is unto new-born babes.

2. Affections so disposed constantly, find a gust, a pleasant taste, a relish in spiritual things. They do in them 'taste that the Lord is gracious;' 1 Pet. ii. 3. To taste of

God's goodness, is to have an experience of a savoury relish and sweetness, in converse and communion with him. And persons whose affections are thus renewed, and thus improved, do taste a sweet savour in all spiritual things. Some of them, as a sense of the love of Christ, are sometimes as it were too hard for them, and overpower them, until they are 'sick of love,' and do 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Neither is there any of them however condited with afflictions or mortifications, but it is sweet unto them; Prov. xxvii. 7. Every thing that is wholesome food, that is good nourishment, though it be but bitter herbs, is sweet to him that is hungry. And when by our affections we have raised up in us a spiritual appetite unto heavenly things, however any of them in their own nature, or in their dispensation, may be bitter to flesh and blood, as are all the doctrines of the cross, they are all sweet unto us, and we can taste how gracious the Lord is in them. When the soul is filled with earthly things, the love of this world, or when the appetite is lost by spiritual sickness, or vitiated and corrupted by any prevalent sin, heavenly things are unsavoury and sapless, or as Job speaks, 'like the white of an egg wherein there is no taste.' There may be in the dispensation of the word a taste or pleasing relish given unto the fancy; there may be so unto the notional understanding, when the affections find no complacency in the things themselves. But unto them who are spiritually minded unto the degree intended, they are all sweet, savoury, pleasant; the affections taste them immediately, as the palate doth meat.

3. They are a just repository of all graces, and therein the treasury of the soul. There are graces of the Spirit whose formal direct residence is in the understanding and the will, as faith itself. And therein are all other graces radically comprised; they grow from that root. Howbeit the most of them have their principal residence in the affections. In them are they preserved secure and ready for exercise on all occasions. And when they are duly spiritual, there is nothing that tends to their growth or improvement, to their cherishing or quickening, which they stand in need of continually, and which God hath made provision for in his word, but they readily receive it, lay it up, keep and preserve it. Hereby they come to be filled with grace, with all graces;

for there is room in them for all the graces of the Spirit to inhabit; and do readily comply with the light and direction of faith unto their exercise. When faith discerns and determines that there is any thing to be done or suffered in a way of duty unto the glory of God, the affections thus disposed do not shut up or stifle the graces that are in them, but carefully offer them unto their proper exercise.

These are some of those things which our affections, conformed unto heavenly things, will attain unto. And thus it is with affections spiritually renewed, by being fixed on things spiritual and heavenly, they are more and more conformed unto them, made like them, and become more spiritual and heavenly themselves.

It is not thus with them whose affections have only an occasional change wrought upon them by the means before described, but are not spiritually renewed. Yea, on the contrary, such persons do design to debate spiritual things, to bring down heavenly things into a conformity with their affections, which, however changed, are not spiritual, but carnal. To evince this, we may observe,

1. These affections are under the light and conduct of such notions in the mind and understanding, as do not give a clear distinct representation of them in their own nature unto them. For where they are not themselves spiritually renewed, there the mind itself is carnal and unrenewed. And such a mind 'discerneth not the things of God, nor can do so, because they are spiritually discerned.' They cannot be discerned aright in their own beauty and glory, but in and by a spiritual saving light which the mind is devoid of. And where they are not thus represented, the affections cannot receive, or cleave unto them as they ought, nor will ever be conformed unto them.

2. Those notions in such persons are oft-times variously influenced and corrupted by fancy and imagination. They are merely puffed up in their fleshly minds; that is, they are filled with vain, foolish, proud imaginations about spiritual things, as the apostle declares, Col. ii. 18, 19. And the work of fancy in a fleshly mind, is to raise up such images of spiritual things as may render them suitable unto natural unrenewed affections.

3. This in the progress of it produceth superstition, false

worship, and idolatry. For they are all of them an attempt to represent spiritual things in a way suited unto carnal unrenewed affections; hence men suppose themselves to be excited by them unto love, joy, fear, delight, in the things themselves, when they all respect that false representation of them, whereby they are suited unto them as carnal. These have been the spring of all false worship and idolatry in the Christian world.

1. The mind and affections have been changed and tinctured with devotion by some of the means we have before insisted on. Herein they will one way or other be exercised about spiritual things, and are ready to receive impressions from any thing that superstition can impose upon them.

2. They are by error and false information set at liberty from the only rule of their actings and exercise, that is, the word of God. Men satisfied themselves, that so their affections were engaged about things spiritual and heavenly, it was no matter at all, whether the way of their exercise was directed by the Scripture or no. Having thus lost their guide and their way, every 'ignis fatuus,' every wandering meteor, allures them to follow its conduct into foolish superstitions. Nothing almost is so ridiculous, nothing so horrid and difficult, that they will not embrace under the notion of things spiritual and heavenly.

3. The carnal minds of men, having no proper distinct apprehensions and notions of spiritual things in their own nature, do endeavour to represent them under such notions and images as may suit them unto their carnal unrenewed affections. For it is implanted almost indelibly upon them, that the end of all knowledge of spiritual things is to propose them unto the embraces of the affections. It were easy to manifest that from these three corrupt springs, arose that flood of idolatry and false worship which spread itself over the church of Rome, and with whose machinations the minds of men are yet too much replenished.

4. Where it is not thus, yet carnal affections do variously debase spiritual things, to bring them into a conformity with themselves. And this may proceed so far, until men think wickedly, that God is altogether like unto them. But I shall not insist on these things any farther.

Lastly, Where affections are spiritually renewed, the person of Christ is the centre of them; but where they are changed only, they tend unto an end in self. Where the new man is put on, 'Christ is all in all;' Col. iii. 10, 11. He is the spring, by his Spirit, that gives them life, light, and being; and he is the ocean that receives all their streams. God, even the Father, presents not himself in his beauty and amiableness as the object of our affections, but as he is in Christ, acting his love in him; 1 John iv. 8, 9. And as unto all other spiritual things, renewed affections cleave unto them, according as they derive from Christ, and lead unto him; for he is unto them 'all and in all.' It is he whom the souls of his saints do love for himself, for his own sake, and all other things of religion in and for him. The air is pleasant and useful, that without which we cannot live or breathe. But if the sun did not enlighten it, and warm it with its beams, if it were always one perpetual night, and cold, what refreshment could be received by it? Christ is 'the Sun of Righteousness,' and if his beams do not quicken, animate, and enlighten the best, the most necessary duties of religion, nothing desirable would remain in them. This is the most certain character of affections spiritually renewed. They can rest in nothing but in Christ; they fix on nothing but what is amiable by a participation of his beauty; and in whatever he is, therein do they find complacency. It is otherwise with them whose affections may be changed, but are not renewed. The truth is, and it may be made good by all sorts of instances, that Christ, in the mystery of his person, and in the glory of his mediation, are the only things that they dislike in religion. False representations of him by images and pictures they may embrace, and delight in false notions of his present glory; greatness and power may affect them; a worship of their own devising they may give unto him, and please themselves in it: corrupt opinions concerning his office and grace may possess their minds, and they may contend for them; but those who are not spiritually renewed, cannot love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity: yea, they have an inward secret aversation from the mystery of his person and his grace. It is self which all their affections centre in, the ways whereof are too long here to be declared.

This is the first thing that is required to render our affec-

tions in such a state and condition, as that from and by them we may be spiritually minded, namely, that they themselves are spiritually and savingly renewed.

The things that remain will admit of a speedy despatch as I suppose.

CHAP. XIX.

THE second thing required that we may be spiritually minded, as unto the interest of our affections therein, is the object of them about which they are conversant, and whereunto they do adhere. What this is materially, or what are the spiritual things which our affections are to be set upon, hath been declared already under the consideration of the object of our thoughts and meditations, for they are the same. Yea, as hath been intimated, the fixing of our affections upon them, is the spring and cause of our thoughts about them. But that which we shall now inquire into, is the true notion and consideration of spiritual and heavenly things, which renders them the formal proper object of spiritual affections, and is the reason of their adherence unto them. For as was intimated before, men may have false notions of spiritual things, under which they may like them and embrace them with unrenewed affections. Wherefore we shall inquire into some of those considerations of heavenly things, under which affections spiritually renewed do satisfactorily cleave unto them with delight and complacency.

1. And the first is, that as they comprehend God in Christ, and all other things, as deriving from him, and tending unto him, they have an infinite beauty, goodness, and amiableness in them, which are powerfully attractive of spiritual affections, and which alone are able to fill them, to satisfy them, to give them rest and acquiescency. Love is the most ruling and prevalent affection in the whole soul. But it cannot be fixed on any object, without an apprehension, true or false, of an amiableness and desirableness in it, from a suitable goodness unto all its desires.

And our fear, so far as it is spiritual, hath divine goodness for its object; Hos. iii. 5. Unless this be that which draws our hearts unto God, and the things of God, in all

pretence of love unto him, men do but frame idols to themselves according to their own understanding, as the prophet speaks, Hos. xiii. 2. Wherefore that our affections may cleave unto spiritual things in a due manner, three things are required.

1. That we apprehend, and do find a goodness, a beauty, and thence an amiableness and desirableness in them; Zech. ix. 17. Many pretend to love God and spiritual things, but they know not why. Why they love other things they know well enough, but why they love God they cannot tell. Many are afraid of him, and suppose they ought to love him, and therefore pretend so to do, though indeed they know they do not; they do but flatter him with their lips when their hearts are far from him. Some are much affected with the benefits and mercies they receive from him, and suppose that they love him on that account. But this love is no other but what the devil falsely charged Job withal, chap. i. 8—11. Some have delight in the outward modes and rites of divine worship, wherewith they satisfy themselves that they love God and spiritual things, when they only please their own imaginations and carnal minds. Many have a traditional apprehension that they ought to love God, they know no reason why they should not, they know it will be ill for them if they do not, and these take it for granted that they do. How few are there who have that spiritual discerning and apprehension of the divine excellencies, that view of the excellency of the goodness and love of God in Christ, as thereby alone to be drawn after him, and to delight in him; yet is this the ground of all sincere real love unto God. Two things are required that we may apprehend an amiable goodness in any thing, and cleave unto it with sincere affection.

1. A real worth or excellency in itself.

2. A suitableness therein unto our condition, state, and desires after rest and blessedness. The first of these is in God, from what he is in himself; the latter is from what he is unto us in Christ; from both he is the only suitable object unto our affections. Under this apprehension do we love God for himself, or for his own sake; not exclusively unto our own advantage therein. For a desire of union and enjoyment, which is our only advantage, is inseparable from *this love*.

It may be, some cannot say that a distinct apprehension of these things, was the first foundation and cause of their love to God; yet are they satisfied that they do love him in sincerity with all their souls. And I say it may be so. God sometimes casts the skirt of his own love over the heart of a poor sinner, and efficaciously draws it unto himself, without a distinct apprehension of these things by a mere sense of the love it hath received. So Elijah passed by Elisha, and cast his mantle upon him as a transient act. But there was such a communication of virtue thereby, that he ran after him, and would not be deferred, though Elijah said, 'Go back again; for what have I done unto thee?' 1 Kings xix. 19, 20. When God hath so cast his love on any soul, it follows after him with all its affections. And whereas God may seem at some times to say, 'Go back again; for what have I done unto thee?' its answer is, 'Lord, whither shall I go?' I cannot leave thee, my heart is given up unto thee, and shall never be taken from thee.

But I say unto such, and to all others, that if we would have refreshing evidences of our love unto God, that it is sincere, if we would have it thrive and flourish, be fervent and constant, we are to exercise ourselves unto the contemplation of the divine goodness, and the suitableness of it unto our souls in and by Jesus Christ. Nor can we cleave unto any spiritual things whatever, with sincere affections, but under these notions of it; first, That it hath a real worth or excellency in itself. Secondly, That it is suitable and desirable unto us. And it is to be bewailed to see how many walk at random in profession, that know neither what they do, nor where they go.

2. As we must see a goodness and probableness in spiritual things absolutely, so as that we may fix our affections on them in a due manner, so we must see it comparatively with respect unto all other things, which gives them a preference in our affections before and above them all. The trial of love lies in the prevailing degree; on more or less. If we love other things, father, mother, houses, lands, possessions, more than Christ, we do not love him at all. Nor is there any equality allowed in this matter, that we may equally love temporal and spiritual things. If we love not Christ more than all those things, we love him not at all.

Wherefore that our affections may cleave unto them in a due manner, we must see an excellency in things spiritual and heavenly, rendering them more desirable than all other things whatever.

With what loving countenances do men look upon their temporal enjoyments; with what tenacious embraces do they cleave unto them? They see that in them which is amiable, which is desirable and suitable unto their affections. Let them pretend what they please, if they see not a greater goodness, that which is more amiable, more desirable in spiritual things, they love them not in a due manner; it is temporal things that hath the rule of their affections. Our psalmist prefers 'Jerusalem before his chiefest joy;' Psal. cxxxvii. 6. Another affirms, 'that the law of God's mouth was better to him than thousands of gold and silver;' cxix. 72. 'More to be desired are the statutes of the Lord than gold; yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, or the honey-comb;' xix. 1. 'For wisdom is better than rubies; and all things that may be desired are not to be compared unto it;' Prov. viii. 11. This is the only stable foundation of all divine affections. A spiritual view and judgment of a goodness, an excellency in them, incomparably above whatever is in the most desirable things of this world, are required thereunto. And if the affections of many pretending highly to them should come to be weighed in this balance, I fear they would be found light and wanting. However it is the duty of them who would not be deceived in this matter, which is of eternal importance, to examine what is that goodness and excellency which is in spiritual things, which they desire in them, upon the account whereof they do sincerely value and esteem them above all things in this world whatever. And let not any deceive themselves with vain words and pretences, whilst their esteem and valuation of present enjoyments doth evidently engage all their affections, their care, their diligence, their industry, so as that a man of a discerning spirit may even feel them turned into self; whilst they are cold, formal, negligent about spiritual things, we must say, 'How dwelleth the love of God in them?' Much more when we see men not only giving up the whole of their time and strength, with the vigour of their spirits, but sacrificing their consciences also unto the attaining of dignities,

honours, preferments, wealth, and ease in the world; who know in their own hearts that they perform religious duties with respect unto temporal advantages; I cannot conceive how it is possible they should discern and approve of a goodness and excellency in spiritual things above all others.

A due consideration is required hereunto, that all spiritual things do proceed from, and are resolved into, an infinite fountain of goodness, so as that our affections may absolutely come unto rest and complacency, and find full assured satisfaction in them. It is otherwise as unto all temporal things. Men would very fain have them to be such, as might give absolute rest and satisfaction unto all their affections. But they are every one of them so far from it, that all of them together cannot compose their minds in rest and peace for one hour. They gain sometimes a transport of affections, and seem for a season to have filled the whole soul, so as it hath no leisure to consider their emptiness and vanity. But a little composure of men's thoughts, shew that they are but a diversion in a journey or labour, they are no rest. Hence are they called 'broken cisterns that will hold no water.' Let a man prize them at the highest rate that it is possible for a rational creature to be seduced into the thoughts of, whereof there have been prodigious instances; let him possess them in abundance beyond whatever any man enjoyed in this world, or his own imagination could beforehand reach unto; let him be assured of the utmost peaceable continuance in the enjoyment of them, that his and their natures are capable of; yet would he not dare to pretend, that all his affections were filled and satisfied with them, that they afforded him perfect rest and peace. Should he do so, the working of his mind every day would convince him of his falsehood and his folly.

But all spiritual things derive from, and lead unto, that which is infinite, which is therefore able to fill all our affections, and to give them full satisfaction with rest and peace. They all lead us to the fountain of living waters, the eternal spring of goodness and blessedness.

I do not say that our affections do attain unto this full rest and satisfaction in this life. But what they come short of therein, ariseth not from any defect in the things themselves to give this rest and satisfaction, as it is with the

whole world; but from the weakness of our affections themselves, which are in part only renewed, and cannot take in the full measures of divine goodness, which in another world they will receive. But whilst we are here, the more we receive them in our minds and souls, the more firmly we adhere unto them, the nearer approaches we make unto our rest and centre.

2. Spiritual things are to be considered as they are filled with divine wisdom. I speak not of himself whose essential wisdom is one of the most amiable excellencies of his holy nature; but of all the effects of his will and grace by Jesus Christ. All spiritual truths, all spiritual and heavenly things whereby God reveals and communicates himself unto the souls of men, and all the ways and means of our approach unto him in faith and obedience through Christ Jesus, I now intend. All these are filled with divine wisdom; see 1 Cor. ii. 7. Eph. iii. 10. i. 8, 9. Now wisdom in itself, and in all the effects of it, is attractive of rational affections. Most men are brutish in them and their actings, for the most part, pouring them out on things fleshly, sensual, and carnal. But where they are at all reduced under the conduct of reason, nothing is so attractive of them, so suited unto them, which they delight in, as that which hath at least an appearance of wisdom. A wise and good man doth command the affections of others, unless it be their interest to hate and oppose him, as commonly it is. And where there is true wisdom in the conduct of civil affairs, sober men cannot but approve of it, like it, delight in it, and men of understanding do bewail the loss of it, since craft, falsehood, treachery, and all sorts of villany, have driven it out of the world. So is divine wisdom attractive of divine gracious affections. The psalmist declares his admiration of, and delight in, the works of God, 'because he hath made them all in wisdom;' Psal. civ. 24. Those characters of divine wisdom which are upon them, which they are filled with, draw the souls of men into a delightful contemplation of them. But all the treasures, all the glory of this wisdom, are laid up, and laid forth, in the great spiritual things of the gospel, in the mystery of God in Christ, and the dispensation of his grace and goodness unto us by him. The consideration hereof fills the souls of believers with holy admi-

ration and delight, and thereon they cleave unto them with all their affections. When we see there is light in them, and all other things are in darkness, that wisdom is in them, in them alone, and all other things are filled with vanity and folly, then are our souls truly affected with them, and do rejoice in them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Unto the most, this wisdom of God is foolishness. It was so of old as the apostle testifieth, 1 Cor. i. And so it continues yet to be. And therefore is the mystery of the gospel despised by them; they can see neither form nor comeliness in it for which it should be desired. Nor will ever any man have sincere spiritual affections unto spiritual things, who hath not a spiritual view of the wisdom of God in them.

This is that which attracts our souls by holy admiration unto unspeakable delight. And the reason why men do so generally decline from any love unto the gospel, and lose all satisfaction in the mystery of it, is because they are not able to discern that infinite wisdom which is the spring, life, and soul of it. When our minds are raised unto the admiration of this wisdom in divine revelations, then will our affections cleave unto the things that are revealed.

3. The acting of our affections in their adherence unto spiritual things is perfective of our present state and condition. That which of all other things doth most debase the nature of man, wherein it makes the nearest approaches unto brutality, yea, whereby it becomes in some respects more vile than the nature of beasts, is the giving up of the affections unto things sensual, unclean, base, and unworthy of its more noble principles. Hence are men said 'to debase themselves unto hell;' Isa. lvii. 9. And their affections do become vile; so as that their being under the power of them, is an effect of revenging justice punishing men for the worst of sins; Rom. i. 26. There is nothing more vile, nothing more contemptible, nothing more like to beasts in baseness, and to hell in punishment, than is the condition of them who have enslaved their nature unto brutish sensual affections. I say vile affections, fixed on, and cleaving unto, sensual objects, do debase the nature of man, and do both corrupt and enslave all the more noble faculties of it; the very consciences and minds of men are defiled by them. If you see a man whose affections are set inordinately on any

thing here below, it is easy to discern how he goes off from his native worth, and debaseth himself therein.

But the fixing of spiritual affections on spiritual objects is perfective of our present state and condition. Not that we can attain perfection by it; but that therein our souls are in a progress towards perfection. This may be granted; look how much vile affections fixed on, and furiously pursuing, things carnal and sensual, do debase our natures beneath its rational constitution, and make it degenerate into bestiality; so much spiritual affections fixed on, and cleaving unto things spiritual and heavenly, do exalt our nature above its mere natural capacity, making an approach unto the state of angels, and of just men made perfect. And as brutish affections, when they have the reins, as they say, on their necks, and are pursued with delight and greediness, do darken the mind, and disturb all the rational powers of the soul (for 'whoredom, and wine, and new wine do take away the heart,' as the prophet speaks, and wickedness altereth the understanding); so holy affections fixed on spiritual things, do elevate, raise, and enlighten the mind with true wisdom and understanding. For the 'fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from iniquity, that is understanding.' And again, as the power of vile affections fill the soul and conscience with tumult, disorder, fear, and shame, where men are not utterly profligate so as that the minds, thoughts, and consciences of persons under their power, is a very hell, for confusion and troubles; so spiritual affections, duly exercised on their proper objects, do preserve all things in order in the whole soul; they are life and peace. All things are quiet and secure in the mind; there is order and peace in the whole soul, in all its faculties, and all their operations, whilst the affections are in a due prevailing manner fixed upon the things that are above. Hence many persons, after great turmoilings in the world, after they have endeavoured by all means to come to rest and satisfaction therein, have utterly renounced all concernments in earthly things, and betaken themselves unto the contemplation of things above, and that only. Many, I confess, of them were mistaken as to the practical part of their devotions, having various superstitions imposed on their minds by the craft of others; but they missed it not in the principle, that tranquillity of mind

was attainable only in setting our affections on things above. James iv. 1. 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' Whence are all the disorders in your minds, your vexations and disquietments, your passions breaking forth sometimes into unseemly brawlings? are they not from hence? The question is put unto yourselves, and your own consciences, namely, from your lusts, that is the disorderly affections that tumultuate in you. Do but search yourselves, and you will quickly see whence all your troubles and disquietments do arise. Your lusts, or corrupt and inordinate affections, do war in you, continually inclining you to things earthly or sensual. Hence many are best and most at quiet when they are in the world, worst when at home in their families; but never are they in such confusion, as when they are forced to retire into themselves.

The due exercise of our affections on heavenly things, hath quite another tendency and effect. It so unites the mind unto them, it so bringeth them unto it, and gives them such a subsistence in it, as that all the powers and faculties of it are in a progress towards their perfection; see 2 Cor. vii. 1. True wisdom and understanding, with soundness of judgment in eternal things in the mind, holiness in the affections themselves, liberty in the will, power in the heart, and peace in the conscience, do in their measures all ensue hereon. Whatever tastes we may have of these things, whatever temporary experience we have of them, they will not flourish in us, they will not abide with us in any constancy, unless we are thus spiritually minded.

4. In the future enjoyment of the present object of our spiritual affections, doth our eternal blessedness consist. All men who are convinced of a future eternal condition, do desire when they depart hence to enter into blessedness and glory. Howbeit what that blessedness, even as unto the general nature of it, is, they know nothing at all; and if they did, they would not know how to desire it. For heaven or blessedness is nothing but the full enjoyment of what we are here to love and delight in above all, of that which is the object of our affections as spiritually renewed. Herein have they neither interest nor concern. But this is that which giveth life unto the affections of believers; they know

thing here below, it is easy to discern how he goes off from his native worth, and debaseth himself therein.

But the fixing of spiritual affections on spiritual objects is perfective of our present state and condition. Not that we can attain perfection by it; but that therein our souls are in a progress towards perfection. This may be granted; look how much vile affections fixed on, and furiously pursuing, things carnal and sensual, do debase our natures beneath its rational constitution, and make it degenerate into bestiality; so much spiritual affections fixed on, and cleaving unto things spiritual and heavenly, do exalt our nature above its mere natural capacity, making an approach unto the state of angels, and of just men made perfect. And as brutish affections, when they have the reins, as they say, on their necks, and are pursued with delight and greediness, do darken the mind, and disturb all the rational powers of the soul (for 'whoredom, and wine, and new wine do take away the heart,' as the prophet speaks, and wickedness altereth the understanding); so holy affections fixed on spiritual things, do elevate, raise, and enlighten the mind with true wisdom and understanding. For the 'fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from iniquity, that is understanding.' And again, as the power of vile affections fill the soul and conscience with tumult, disorder, fear, and shame, where men are not utterly profligate so as that the minds, thoughts, and consciences of persons under their power, is a very hell, for confusion and troubles; so spiritual affections, duly exercised on their proper objects, do preserve all things in order in the whole soul; they are life and peace. All things are quiet and secure in the mind; there is order and peace in the whole soul, in all its faculties, and all their operations, whilst the affections are in a due prevailing manner fixed upon the things that are above. Hence many persons, after great turmoilings in the world, after they have endeavoured by all means to come to rest and satisfaction therein, have utterly renounced all concernments in earthly things, and betaken themselves unto the contemplation of things above, and that only. Many, I confess, of them were mistaken as to the practical part of their devotions, having various superstitions imposed on their minds by the craft of others; but *they* missed it not in the principle, that tranquillity of mind

was attainable only in setting our affections on things above. James iv. 1. 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' Whence are all the disorders in your minds, your vexations and disquietments, your passions breaking forth sometimes into unseemly brawlings? are they not from hence? The question is put unto yourselves, and your own consciences, namely, from your lusts, that is the disorderly affections that tumultuate in you. Do but search yourselves, and you will quickly see whence all your troubles and disquietments do arise. Your lusts, or corrupt and inordinate affections, do war in you, continually inclining you to things earthly or sensual. Hence many are best and most at quiet when they are in the world, worst when at home in their families; but never are they in such confusion, as when they are forced to retire into themselves.

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4. In the future enjoyment of the present object of our spiritual affections, doth our eternal blessedness consist. All men who are convinced of a future eternal condition, do desire when they depart hence to enter into blessedness and glory. Howbeit what that blessedness, even as unto the general nature of it, is, they know nothing at all; and if they did, they would not know how to desire it. For heaven or blessedness is nothing but the full enjoyment of what we are here to love and delight in above all, of that which is the object of our affections as spiritually renewed. Herein have they neither interest nor concern. But this is that which giveth life unto the affections of believers; they know

that in the enjoyment of God in Christ, their eternal blessedness doth consist. How this is their happiness and glory, how it will give them an everlasting overflowing satisfaction and rest, they understand in the first fruits of it which they here receive. And this is the ultimate object of their affections in this world, and they go forth unto all other spiritual things in order thereunto. The more therefore their affections are fixed on them, the more they are kept up unto that due exercise, the nearer approaches they make unto this blessed state. When their minds are possessed with this persuasion, when it is confirmed in them by daily experience of that sweetness, rest, and satisfaction, which they find in cleaving unto God with fervent love and delight, in vain shall any other objects rise up in competition to draw them off unto themselves. The more we love God, the more like we are unto him, and the more near the enjoyment of him.

CHAP. XX.

HAVING considered the nature of spiritual affections as renewed by grace, and those notions of their objects under which they cleave unto them, it remains only that we inquire into the way of the soul's application of itself unto those objects by its affections, which belong also unto our being spiritually minded. And I shall give an account hereof in some few particulars, with brief observations on them.

1. It is required that our adherence unto all spiritual things with love and delight be firm and stable. The affections are the powers and instruments of the soul whereby it makes application unto any thing without itself, and cleaves unto it. This is their nature and use with reference unto things spiritual. Transient thoughts of spiritual things, with vanishing desires, may rise out of present convictions, as they did with them who cried out unto our Saviour, 'Lord, give us evermore of this bread,' and immediately left him. Such occasional thoughts and desires are common unto all sorts of men, yea, the worst of them; 'let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be as his.' Fading satisfaction with joy and delight do often befall men in their attendance on the word, who yet never come to have it rooted in their hearts.

There are sundry things wanting unto the sincerity of these affections.

1. Those in whom they are, never had a clear spiritual view of the things themselves, in their own nature, which they pretend to be affected withal.

2. They have not a sincere love unto them, and delight in them, for their own sakes, but are only affected with some outward circumstances and concernments of them.

3. They find not a suitableness in them unto the ruling principles of their minds. They do not practically, they cannot truly say, 'the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light;' 'his commandments are not grievous;' or, with the psalmist, 'Oh! how do I love thy law.'

4. Their affections are transient, unstable, vanishing, as unto their exercise and operations. They are on and off, now pleased, and anon displeased; earnest for a little while, and then cold and indifferent. Hence the things which they seem to affect, have no transforming efficacy upon their souls; they dwell not in them, in their power.

But where our affections unto spiritual things are sincere, where they are the true genuine application of the soul, and adherence unto them, they are firm and stable; love and delight are kept up unto such a constant exercise, as renders them immoveable; this is that which we are exhorted unto, 1 Cor. xv. 58. 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Transient affections, with their occasional operations, deceive multitudes, ofttimes they are pregnant in their actions, as those that are most sincere; and many effects in joys, in mournings, in complaints, they will produce, especially when excited by any outward affliction, sickness, and the like. But their goodness is like the early cloud, or morning dew. Let none therefore please themselves with the operations of transient affections with respect unto spiritual things, be they never so urgent, or so pleasant, or so frequent in their returns; those that are sincere, are at all times firm and stable.

2. That the soul do find a spiritual relish and savour in the things which it so adheres unto. The affections are the palate of the soul, whereby it tastes of all things which

it receiveth or refuseth; and it will not long cleave unto any thing which they find not a savour and relish in. Something was spoken before of that sweetness which is in spiritual things; and the taste of them consists in a gracious sense of their suitableness unto the affections, inclinations, and dispositions of the mind. Hence they have no relish unto men of carnal minds. Whoever therefore would know whether his affections do sincerely adhere unto spiritual things, let him examine what relish, what sweetness, what savour he findeth in them. When he is pleased with them as the palate with suitable and proper food, when he finds that he receives nourishment by them in the inward man; then doth he adhere unto them in a due manner.

This spiritual taste is the ground of all experience; it is not what we have heard or understood only, but what we have tried and tasted, whereof we have experience. This makes us long for what we have formerly enjoyed, and strengthens faith, as unto what we pray for and expect.

In every darkness, in every damp of spirit, under every apprehension of deadness, or the withdrawing of the sense of divine love, the soul knoweth what it wants, and what it doth desire. Oh! saith such a one, that it were now with me as in former days; I know he who then gave me such refreshing tastes of his own goodness,who made every thing of himself sweet and pleasant unto me, can renew this work of his grace towards me; he can give me a new spiritual appetite and relish, and he can make all spiritual things savoury unto me again.

As a man under a languishing sickness, or when he is chastened with strong pain, so as that his soul abhorreth bread, and his daily meat, can remember what appetite he had, with what gust and relish he was wont to take in his food in the days of his health, which makes him to know that there is such a condition, and to desire a return unto it: so is it with a sin-sick soul; it can find no relish, no gust, no sweetness in spiritual things; he finds no savour in the bread of the word, nor any refreshment in the ordinances of the gospel, which yet in themselves are daily meat, 'a feast of fat things, and of wine well refined.' Yet doth it remember former days, when all these things were sweet unto him. And if he have any spark of spiritual life yet remaining, it

will stir him up to seek with all diligence after a recovery. How is it with you who are now under spiritual decays; who find no taste or relish in spiritual things; unto whom the word is not savoury, nor other ordinances powerful? Call to mind how it hath been with you in former days; and what ye found in these things; 'if so be,' saith the apostle, 'that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' If you have not, it is to be feared that you have never yet had the least sincere love unto spiritual things; for where that is, it will give a spiritual relish of them. If you have, how is it you can give yourselves rest one moment, without an endeavour after the healing of your backsliding?

3. It is required that our affections be so set on spiritual things, so as to be a continual spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations. No man can be so forsaken of reason, as to suppose that he hath any sincere affections for what he thinks little on, or not at all; or that he can have a true affection for any thing which will not stir up, and ingenerate in him continual thoughts about it. Let men try themselves as unto their relations, or their enjoyments, or the objects of their predominant lusts, and they will find how things are stated in their own minds. And therefore, whereas all men pretend to love God and Christ, and the ways of God, and yet know in their own hearts, that they little think of them, or meditate upon them, both their pretence and religion is vain. Where our affections are duly placed on heavenly things, so as that we are indeed spiritually minded, they will be a constant spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations. But this also hath been before spoken unto.

4. When our affections are thus applied unto spiritual things, they will be prevalant and victorious against solicitations unto the contrary, or allurements to draw them off unto any other objects. The work of all our spiritual adversaries, is to solicit and tempt our affections, to divert them from their proper object. There are some temptations of Satan that make an immediate impression on the mind and conscience. Such are his injection of diabolical blasphemous thoughts concerning God, his being, nature, and will; and the distresses which he reduceth men unto in their consciences, through darkness, and misrepresentations of God

and his goodness. But the high road and constant practice of all our spiritual adversaries, is by the solicitation of our affections unto objects that are in themselves, or in the degree of our affections towards them, evil and sinful. Of the first are all sensual pleasures of the flesh, in drunkenness, uncleanness, gluttony, chambering, and wantonness, with all sorts of sensual pleasures. Of the latter is all our inordinate love unto self, our families, and the whole world, or the things of it. Unto this end, every thing in the whole world, that may make provision for lust, is made use of. Herein consists the nature and efficacy of most of those temptations which we have to conflict withal. Solicitations they are of our affections to draw them off from things spiritual and heavenly, and to divert them unto other things. Hereby do our enemies endeavour to beguile us, as the serpent beguiled Eve; with fair and false representations of other beloveds, that our hearts be not preserved, as a chaste virgin, in all their affections for Christ.

And it is almost incredible how apt we are to be beguiled by the specious pretences wherewith we are solicited.

That our affections in the degree treated about, suppose of love unto the world and the things of it, are lawful and allowable, is one of the sophisms and artifices wherewith many are deluded. Hereon, provided they run not out into scandalous excesses, they approve of themselves in such a worldly frame of mind, and acting according unto it, as renders them fruitless, useless, senseless, and is inconsistent with that prevailing adherence of affections unto spiritual things, that ought to be in us. Others are deluded by a pretence, that it is in one instance only they would be spared, it is but this or that object, they would give out the embraces of the affections unto, in all other things they will be entire for God; the vanity of which pretence we have spoken unto before. Others are ruined by giving place unto their solicitations, with respect unto any one affection whatever. As suppose it be that of fear. In times of danger for profession, multitudes have lost all their affections unto spiritual things, through a fear of losing that which is temporal, as their lives, their liberties, their goods, and the like. When once Satan or the world have gotten, as it were, the mastery of this affection, or a prevalent interest in it, they will not fail to

draw all others into a defection from Christ and the gospel. He that loves his life shall lose it.

Wherefore, it is no ordinary nor easy thing to preserve our affections pure, entire, and steady, in their vigorous adherence unto spiritual things, against all these solicitations. Watchfulness, prayer, faith in exercise, and a daily examination of ourselves, are required hereunto. For want of a due attendance unto these things, and that with respect unto this end, namely, the preservation of our spiritual affections in their integrity, many, even before they are aware, die away as to all power and vigour of spiritual life.

5. Affections thus fixed upon things spiritual and heavenly, will give great relief against the remainders of that vanity of mind which believers themselves are ofttimes perplexed withal. Yea, I do not know any thing that is a greater burden unto them, nor which they more groan for deliverance from. The instability of the mind, its readiness to receive impressions from things vain and useless, the irregularity of their thoughts, are a continual burden unto many. Nothing can give the soul any relief herein, nothing can give bounds unto the endless vanity of foolish imaginations, nothing can dry up the springs from whence they arise, or render the soil wherein they grow, barren as unto their production and maintenance, but only the growth of spiritual affections, with their continual vigorous actings on heavenly things. For hereby the heart and mind will be so united unto them, (that which the psalmist prays for, Psal. lxxxvi. 11.) as that they will not be ready to depart from them, and give entertainment unto vain, empty, foolish imaginations. Thoughts of other things, greater and better than what this world can contain, will be continually arising in the mind, not to be laid aside by any solicitations of vanity. For he that is wise cannot but know and consider, that the spiritual things which it exerciseth its thoughts about, have substance in them, are durable, profitable, always the same, that the advantage, peace, rest, riches, and reward of the soul lieth in them; but other imaginations which the foolish mind is apt to give entertainment unto, are vain, empty, fruitless, and such as end in shame and trouble.

Again, the vanity of the mind in an indulgence unto foolish imaginations ariseth from, or is animated and increased by, that gust and relish which it finds in earthly

things, and enjoyments of them, whether lawful or unlawful. Hence on all occasions, yea, in holy duties, it will be ready to turn aside, and take a taste of them, and sometimes to take up with them; like a tippling traveller, who, though he be engaged in a journey on the most earnest occasion, yet he cannot but be bibbing here and there as he passes by, and it may be, at length, before he comes to his journey's end, lodgeth himself in a nasty alehouse. When men are engaged in important duties, yet if they always carry about them a strong gust and relish of earthly things, they will ever and anon in their thoughts divert unto them, either as unto such real objects as they are accustomed unto, or as unto what present circumstances do administer unto corrupt affections, or as to what they fancy and create in their own minds. And sometimes, it may be, after they have made them a few shorter visits, they take up with them, and lose wholly the work they were engaged in. Nothing, as was said, will give relief herein, but the vigorous and constant exercise of our affections on heavenly things. For this will insensibly take off that gust and relish which the mind hath found in things present, earthly, and sensual, and make them as a sapless thing unto the whole soul. They will so place the cross of Christ in particular on the heart, as that the world shall be crucified unto it, losing all that brightness, beauty, and savour, which it made use of to solicit our minds unto thoughts and desires about it.

Moreover, this frame of spirit alone will keep us on our watch against all those ways and means whereby the vanity of the mind is excited and maintained. Such are the wandering and roving of the outward senses. The senses, especially that of the eye, are ready to become purveyors to make provisions for the vanity and lusts of the mind. Hence the psalmist prays, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' If the eyes rove after vain objects, the mind will ruminate upon them; and another affirms, that he had 'made a covenant with his eyes,' to preserve them from fixing on such objects as might solicit lust or corrupt affections. And it were a useful labour, would this place admit of it, to discover the ready serviceableness of the outward senses and members of the body unto sin and folly, if not watched against; Rom. vi. 13. 19. Of the same nature is the incessant working of the fancy and imagination, which of itself

is evil continually, and all the day long. This is the food of a vain mind, and the vehicle or means of conveyance for all temptations from Satan and the world. Besides, sundry occasions of life and conversation are usually turned, or abused unto the same end, exciting and exercising of the vanity of the mind. Wherever our affections are fixed on spiritual things, our minds will constantly be under a warning or charge to keep diligent watch against all these things, whereby that vanity, which it so abhorreth, which it is so burdened withal, is maintained and excited. Nor without this prevalency in the mind, will ever a work of mortification be carried on in the soul; Col. iii. 2. 4, 5.

CHAP. XXI.

HAVING declared wherein this duty of being spiritually minded doth consist, that which remains in compliance with the text, from whence the whole is educed, is to manifest how it is life and peace, which is affirmed by the apostle. This shall be done with all brevity, as having passed through that which was principally designed.

And two things are we to inquire into.

First, What is meant by life and peace.

Secondly, In what sense to be spiritually minded, is both of them.

First, That spiritual life whereof we are made partakers in this world, is threefold, or there are three gospel privileges or graces so expressed.

1. There is the life of justification. Therein the just by faith do live, as freed from the condemnatory sentence of the law. So 'the righteousness of one comes on all that believe unto the justification of life;' Rom. v. 18. It gives unto believers a right and title to life; for they that 'receive the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus;' ver. 17. This is not the life here intended, for this life depends solely on the sovereign grace of God by Jesus Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness unto us, unto pardon, right to life and salvation.

2. There is a life of sanctification. As life in the foregoing sense is opposed unto death spiritual as unto the guilt

of it, and the condemnatory sentence of death wherewith it was accompanied; so in this it is opposed unto it, as unto its internal power on, and efficacy in, the soul, to keep it under an impotency unto all acts of spiritual life; yea, an enmity against them. This is that life wherewith we are 'quickened by Christ Jesus,' when before we were 'dead in trespasses and sins;' Ephes. ii. 1—5. Of this life the apostle treats directly in this place; for having, in the first four verses of the chapter, declared the life of justification in the nature and causes of it; in the following he treats of death spiritual in sin, with the life of sanctification, whereby we are freed from it.

And to be spiritually minded is this life in a double sense.

1. In that it is the principal effect and fruit of that life. The life itself consists in the infusion and communication of a principle of life, that is, of faith and obedience, unto all the faculties and powers of our soul, enabling us to live unto God. To be spiritually minded, which is a grace whereunto many duties do concur, and that not only as to the actings of all grace in them, but as unto the degree of their exercise, cannot be this life formally. But it is that wherein the power of this principle of life doth in the first and chiefest place put forth itself. All actings of grace, all duties of obedience, internal and external, do proceed from this spring and fountain. Nothing of that kind is acceptable unto God, but what is influenced by it, and is an effect of it, but it principally puts forth its virtue and efficacy in rendering our minds spiritual, which if it effect not, it works not at all; that is, we are utterly destitute of it. The next and immediate work of the principle of life in our sanctification, is to renew the mind, to make it spiritual; and thereon gradually to carry it on unto that degree which is here called being spiritually minded.

2. It is the proper adjunct and evidence of it. Would any one know whether he be spiritually alive unto God, with the life of sanctification and holiness? The communication of it unto him, being by an almighty act of creating power, Ephes. ii. 10. it is not easily discernible, so as to help us to make a right judgment of it, from its *essence* or form. But where things are themselves indis*cernible*, we may know them from their proper and insepa-

rable adjuncts, which are therefore called by the names of the essence or the form itself. Such is this being spiritually minded with respect unto the life of sanctification; it is an inseparable property and adjunct of it, whereby it infallibly evidenceth itself unto them in whom it is. In these two respects it is the life of sanctification.

3. Life is taken for the comforts and refreshments of life; so speaks the apostle, 1 Thess. iii. 8. 'Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord;' now our life will do us good, we have the comforts, the refreshments, and the joys of it. 'Non est vivere, sed valere vita.' The comforts and satisfactions of life, are more life than life itself. It is life, that is, that which makes life to be so, bringing in that satisfaction, those refreshments unto it, which make it pleasant and desirable. And I do suppose this is that which is principally intended in the words of the apostle; it is life, a cheerful joyous life, a life worth the living. In explication and confirmation whereof, it is added, that it is peace also.

Peace is twofold. 1. General and absolute, that is, peace with God through Jesus Christ, which is celebrated in the Scripture, and which is the only original spring and fountain of all consolation unto believers; that which virtually contains in it every thing that is good, useful, or desirable unto them. But it is not here precisely intended. It is not so,

1. As to the immediate ground and cause of it, which is our justification, not our sanctification, Rom. v. 1. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' So Christ alone is our peace, as he who hath made 'peace for us by the blood of the cross;' Ephes. ii. 14, 15. Hereof our being spiritually minded is no way the cause or reason, only it is an evidence and pledge of it, as we shall see.

2. Not as unto the formal nature of it. Peace with God through the blood of Christ, is one thing; and peace in our minds through a holy frame in them, is another. The former is communicated unto us by an immediate act of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; Rom. v. 5. the latter is an effect on our minds begun, and gradually carried on, by the duties we have before at large declared. The immediate actings of the Holy Spirit, in sealing us, witnessing unto our adoption, and being an earnest of glory, are required unto the former; our own sedulity and diligence in duties, and the exercise of all grace, are required unto the latter.

2. Peace is taken for a peculiar fruit of the Spirit, consisting in a gracious quietness and composure of mind in the midst of difficulties, temptations, troubles, and such other things as are apt to fill us with fears, despondencies, and disquietments. This is that which keeps the soul in its own power, free from transports by fears or passions, on all the abiding grounds of gospel consolation. For although this be a peculiar especial grace, yet it is that which is influenced and kept alive by the consideration of all the love of God in Christ, and all the fruits of it.

And whereas peace includes, in the first notion of it, an inward freedom from oppositions and troubles, which those in whom it is are outwardly exposed unto, there are two things from which we are secured by this peace, which is an effect of being spiritually minded.

1. The first is offences. There is nothing of whose danger we are more warned in the gospel, than of offences. 'Woe to the world,' saith the Saviour, 'because of offences.' All ages, all times and seasons, are filled with them, and they prove pernicious and destructive to the souls of many. Such are the scandalous divisions that are among Christians; the endless differences of opinions, and diversity of practices in religion and the worship of God; the falls and sins of professors, the fearful end of some of them; the reproaches that are cast on all that engage into any peculiar way of holiness and strictness of life; with other things of the like nature, whereby the souls of innumerable persons are disquieted, subverted, or infected, are to be reckoned unto this head. Against any hurtful or noxious influence on our minds from these things, against disquietments, dejections of spirit, and disconsolations, are we secured by this peace. So the psalmist assures us, Psal. cxix. 165. 'Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.' The law, or the word of God, is the only way of the revelation of God and his will unto us, and the only outward way and rule of our converse and communion with him. Wherefore, to love the law, is the principal part of our being heavenly minded; yea, virtually that which comprehends the whole. For such as do so, nothing, none of the things before-mentioned, nor any other of the like nature, shall be an offence, a stumbling-block, or cause of falling into sin. And the *reason is,* because they have such an experience in them

selves of the truth, power, efficacy, and holiness of the gospel, as that the miscarriages of men, under a profession of it, shall never be unto them an occasion of falling, or being offended at Christ. And I look upon it as a sign of a very evil frame of heart, when men are concerned in the miscarriages of some that have made profession, whereby they are, it may be, damaged in their outward concerns, so as that they are surprised into reflections on that religion which they profess, professing the same themselves.

2. The second is afflictions, persecutions, and sufferings of all sorts. It is known by all (it were well if it were not so well known) what disquietments, dejections, and disconsolations these things are apt to fill the minds of men withal; what fears, troubles, sorrows, they reflect upon them. Against all these effects of them, this peace intended, gives us security. It makes us to preserve a peaceable, yea, a joyous life in our conflict with them. See John xvi. 33.

Both these, as here joined together, life and peace, do comprise a holy frame of heart and mind, wherein the souls of believers do find rest, quietness, refreshment, and satisfaction in God, in the midst of temptations, afflictions, offences, and sufferings. It is the soul's composure of itself in God, in his love in Christ Jesus, so as not greatly to be put out of order, to be cast down with any thing that may befall it, but affords men cheerfulness and satisfaction in themselves, though they walk sometimes in the valley of the shadow of death. Such persons have that in them, abiding with them, as will give them life and peace under all occurrences.

Secondly, Our next inquiry is, How this spiritual mindedness is life and peace, or what it contributes unto them; how it produceth the frame of heart and mind so expressed. And this it doth several ways.

1. It is the only means on our part, of retaining a sense of divine love. The love of God in a gracious sense of it, as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, is the first and only foundation of all durable comforts; such as will support and refresh us under all oppositions and distresses, that is, of life and peace in our souls in any condition. This God communicates by an act of sovereign grace, for the most part without any preparation for it in ourselves. 'He creates the fruit of the lips; peace, peace.' But although di-

vine love be in itself unchangeable, and always the same; yet this sense of it may be lost, as it was in David, when he prayed that God would restore unto him the joys of his salvation, Psal. li. 12. And so many others have found it by woful experience. To insist upon all that is required on our parts, that we may obtain a gracious refreshing sense of divine love, after it is once granted unto us, belongs not unto my present purpose. But this I say, there is not any thing wherein we are more concerned, for to be careful and diligent in, than as unto what belongs to that end. For men who, by a mere act of sovereign grace, have tasted herein of the goodness of God, who have had the consolation and joys of it, to be negligent in the keeping and preserving it in their souls, is a provocation that they will at one time or other be sensible of. There is nothing doth more grieve the Holy Spirit, than to have his especial work, whereby he seals us unto the day of redemption, neglected or despised. And it argues a mighty prevalency of some corruption or temptation, that shall cause men willingly, and by their own sloth, to forfeit so inestimable a grace, mercy, and privilege. And it is that which there are but few of us who have not reason to bewail our folly in. Every intimation of divine love is an inestimable jewel, which, if safely treasured up in our hearts, adds unto our spiritual riches; and being lost will, at one time or another, affect us with sorrow.

And I am afraid that many of us are very negligent herein, unto the great prejudice of our souls and spiritual state. Many of such intimations are given us by the Holy Ghost through the word, which we take little notice of; either we know not the voice of Christ in them, or do not hearken unto him in a due manner, or refuse a compliance with him, when we cannot but know that he speaks unto us. See Cant. v. 2, 3. Or if we receive any impressions of a gracious sense of divine love in them, we quickly lose them, not knowing how much the life of our souls is concerned therein, and what use of them we may have in our following temptations, trials, and duties.

Now the great means of retaining a sense of the love of God, which is the only spring of life and peace unto our souls, is this grace and duty of being spiritually minded. *This is* evident from the very nature of the duty. For,

1. It is the soul's preserving of itself in a frame meet

to receive and retain this sense of God's love. What other way can there be on our part, but that our minds which are so to receive it and retain it, are spiritual and heavenly, always prepared for that holy converse and communion with himself, which he is pleased to grant us through Jesus Christ. And,

2. It will fix our thoughts and affections upon the grace and love of God, communicating such an inestimable mercy unto us, as is a sense of his love, which is the only means for the preservation of a relish of it in our hearts. He who is in this frame of mind, will remember, call over, and ruminate upon, all such gracious pledges of divine favour, as David is often remembering and calling over what he received in such places, as in the 'land of the Hermonites, and at the hill Mizar;' Psal. xlii. This is the great way whereby this treasure may be preserved.

3. A person so minded, and he alone, will have a due valuation of such intimations and pledges of divine love. Those who are full of other things, whose affections cleave unto them, do never esteem heavenly mercies and privileges as they ought. The full soul loatheth the honeycomb. And God is well pleased, when a high valuation is put upon his kindness; as he is greatly provoked by the contrary frame; which indeed nothing but infinite patience could bear withal. It is a high provocation of God, when men are regardless of, and unthankful for, outward temporal mercies; when they receive them and use them as if they were their own, that they were lords of them, at least, that they are due unto them. Much more is he provoked with our regardlessness of the least of those mercies which are the peculiar purchase of the blood of his Son, and the effects of his eternal love and grace. He alone who is spiritually minded, valueth, prizeth, and lays up these inestimable jewels in a due manner.

4. Such persons only know how to use and improve all communications of a sense of divine love. These things are not granted unto us to lie by us, without any use of them. They are gracious provisions wherewith we are furnished to enable us unto all other duties, conflicts, and trials. On all occasions are they to be called over for our spiritual relief and encouragement. Hereby are they safely retained. For in the due improvement of them, they grow *more bright in* our minds every day, and are ready for use, in

which posture they are safely preserved. But these things will yet be farther manifest in the instances that ensue.

2. This frame of mind casts out all principles and causes of trouble and disquietment, which are inconsistent with life and peace. There are in us by nature principles of contrariety and opposition unto spiritual life and peace, with sundry things, whose abode and prevalency in us is inconsistent with them. I shall give only one or two instances hereof.

1. It will cast out all 'filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness' from our minds. Without this, we can receive no benefit by the means of grace, nor perform any duty in a right manner; James i. 27. This is that which stands in direct immediate opposition and contrariety unto our being spiritually minded, so as they can have no consistency in the same person. And they expel one another like heat and cold. And where there is this 'filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,' there is neither life nor peace. Unclean lusts of the flesh, or of the spirit, working, tumultuating, acting themselves in the minds of men, will not suffer either the life of holiness to flourish in them, or any solid peace to abide with them. The soul is weakened by them as unto all spiritual actings, and made like 'a troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' Where they are absolutely predominant, there is a hell within, of darkness, confusion, and enmity against God, preparing men for a hell of punishment without, unto eternity. And according as they remain, or have any prevalency in us, so are spiritual life and peace impaired and obstructed by them. Now the very nature of this grace and its universal exercise, is suited to the casting out of all the relics of this 'filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.' It brings in a principle into the mind directly contrary unto that from whence they do proceed. All the actings of it, which we have described, lie in direct tendency unto the extirpation of these causes of filthiness which ruin life and peace; nor will they by any other way be cast out. If the mind be not spiritual, it will be carnal; if it mind not things above, it will fix itself inordinately on things below.

2. That disorder which is by nature in the affections and *passions* of the mind, which is directly opposite unto spi*ritual life* and peace, is cast out, or cured hereby. It is a

blessed promise of the times of the New Testament, of the kingdom and rule of Christ, that through the efficacy of gospel grace, 'The lion shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid;' Isa. xi. 6. Persons of the most intemperate and outrageous passions, shall be made meek and lovely. Where this is not in some measure effected, according unto the degrees of the prevalency of such passions in us, we have not been made partakers of evangelical grace. It were an easy task to demonstrate how the disorder of our affections and passions is destructive of spiritual life and peace. The contrariety that is in them, and contradiction unto one another, their violence, impetuousness, and restlessness, their readiness to receive and take in provocations on all occasions, and frequently on none at all, but what imagination presents unto them, are sufficient evidences hereof. Can we think that life and peace do inhabit that soul wherein anger, wrath, envy, excess in love unto earthly things, do dwell, and on all occasions exert themselves? there, where there is a continual tumult, fighting, and rebellion, as there is where the passions of the mind are not under the conduct of reason, nor of grace?

The nature and principal effect of this spiritual mindedness, is to bring all the affections and passions of our minds into that holy order wherein they were created. This was that uprightness wherein God made us; namely, the whole blessed order of all the powers, faculties, and affections of our souls, in all their operations, in order unto our living unto God. And this is restored unto us by this grace, this duty of being spiritually minded. And wherein it falls short of that perfection which we had originally (for the remainders of that disorder which befell us by sin, will still in part continue), it is recompensed by the actings of that new principle of gospel grace which is exercised in it. For every act of our affections towards God, in the power of grace, exceeds, and is of another nature, above that we could do, or attain unto, in the state of nature uncorrupted. Hereby are life and peace brought into our souls, and preserved in them.

3. It is that whereby our hearts and minds are taken off from the world, and all inordinate love thereunto. Where this is in prevalent degree, there is neither life nor peace; and every excess in it both weakens spiritual life, and dis-

turbs, yea, destroys all solid spiritual peace. I have occasionally spoken unto it before, as also the way whereby our minding of the things that are above in a due manner, doth deliver and preserve our souls from the snares of it. And if we diligently examine ourselves, we shall find, that in our inordinate affections, and cleaving unto these things, the principal causes why we thrive no more in the power of spiritual life, and whence we meet with so many disquietments and dejections of spirit unto the disturbance of our peace and rest in God, is from hence. For there is no grace which is not impaired by it in its nature, or not obstructed by it in its exercise. Wherefore, 'to be spiritually minded is life and peace,' because it subdues and expels that inordinate love unto present things, which is destructive of them both, and inconsistent with them.

4. It preserves the mind in a due and holy frame in the performance of all other duties. This also is indispensably required, unto the preservation of life and peace, especially unto the improvement of them. They will not abide, much less thrive and flourish, in any persons who are negligent in holy duties, or do not perform them in a due manner. And there are four things which impede or hinder us from such an attendance unto holy duties, as may be advantageous unto our souls; against all which we have relief by being spiritually minded.

1. Distractions.
2. Despondencies.
3. Weariness.
4. Unreadiness of grace for exercise.

1. Distraction of mind and thoughts hath this evil effect, which many complain of, few take the right way of deliverance from. For this evil will not be cured by attendance unto any particular directions, without a change of the whole frame of our minds. Nothing can give us relief herein, but a prevalent delight in being exercised about things spiritual and heavenly. For hence arise all our distractions; the want of fixing our minds on spiritual things with delight, makes them obnoxious to be diverted from them on all occasions; yea, to seek occasions for such diversions. It is this frame alone, namely, of spiritual mindedness, that will give us this delight. For thereby the soul is transformed *into the* likeness of spiritual things; so as that they are

suited unto it, and pleasant unto our affections. The mind and the things themselves are thereby so fitted unto each other, that on every occasion they are ready for mutual embraces, and not easily drawn off by any cause or means of the distractions so complained of, yea, they will all be prevented hereby.

2. Despondencies in duties arise from the frequent incursions of the guilt of sin. The remembrance hereof frequently solicits the minds of persons in their first entrances into duty, unless they are under especial actings of grace, stirring them up unto earnestness and fervency in what they undertake. At other seasons it renders men lifeless and heartless, so as that they know not whether they had best pray or no, when duty and opportunity call them thereunto. To be spiritually minded, we have manifested in many instances, is the great preservative against these disheartening incursions of sin. It is the soul's watch and guard against them, whencesoever they arise or proceed. No lust or corruption can be prevalent in a spiritual mind. And this is the principal cause of such incursions of sin, as affect the soul with a disheartening sense of guilt. No affections can abide in any sinful disorder, where the mind is so affected. This also gives sin an entrance unto a distracting sense of guilt. But the sole cure hereof lies in this grace and duty. The like may be said of all other ways, means, and occasions of such incursions of sin.

3. Weariness in, and of, spiritual duties, abate their tendency unto the improvement of life and peace in us. This evil ariseth from the same cause with that of distraction before-mentioned. And it is ofttimes increased by the weakness and indispositions of the flesh, or of the outward man. Sometimes the spirit is willing, but through the weakness of the flesh, it is disappointed. The principal cure hereof lies in that delight which spiritual mindedness gives unto the soul in spiritual things. For where there is a constant delight in any thing, there will be no weariness, at least, not such as shall hinder any from cleaving firmly unto the things wherein he doth delight. Whilst therefore we are exercised in a delight in spiritual things, weariness cannot prevalently assault the mind. And it is the only relief against that weariness which proceeds from the indispositions of the outward man. For as it will preserve the mind from attending

too much unto their solicitations, crying spare thyself, by filling and possessing the thoughts with other things; so it will offer a holy violence unto the complaints of the flesh, silencing them with a sense of, and delight in, holy duties.

4. The unreadiness of grace for its due and proper exercise, is another thing which defeats us of the benefit of holy duties. The seasons of them are come, sense of duty carries men unto an attendance unto them, and the performance of them. But when they should enter upon them, those graces of faith, love, fear, and delight, wherein the soul and being of them do consist, are out of the way, unready for a due exercise; so as that men take up and satisfy themselves with the mere outward performance of them. The heart and mind have been taken up with other things; due preparation hath been wanting; men come unto them with reeking thoughts of earthly occasions; and it is no easy matter in, or immediately out of, such a frame, to stir up grace unto a due exercise. But herein lieth the very life of being spiritually minded. The nature of it consists in the keeping and preserving all grace in a readiness for its exercise as our occasions require.

And this is an effectual way whereby this grace comes to be life and peace. For they cannot be attained, they cannot be preserved, without such a constancy and spirituality in all holy duties, as we shall never arrive at, unless we are spiritually minded.

Lastly; this frame of mind brings the soul unto, and keeps it at, its nearest approaches unto heaven and blessedness, wherein lie the eternal springs of life and peace. According unto the degrees of this grace in us, such are those of our approaches unto God. Nearness unto him gives us our initial conformity unto him, by the renovation of his image in us, as our presence with him will give us perfection therein; for when we see him, we shall be like unto him. He therefore alone as he is in Christ being the fountain of life and peace, by our drawing nigh unto him, and by our likeness of him, will they thrive and flourish in our souls.

THE END.

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